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VIII

THE CHRISTIAN TRADITION AND ITS VERIFICATION

1912

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THE CHRISTIAN TRADITION AND ITS VERIFICATION

BY

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PRELIMINARY NOTE

THE Angus Lectureship has its origin in a Fund raised as a Testimonial to the Rev. Joseph Angus, M.A., D.D., as an expression of the sense entertained by the subscribers of his character and services as President of the Baptist Theological College, formerly situated at Stepney, and now at Regent's Park, London. Dr. Angus having intimated his desire that the Fund should be devoted to the establishment of a permanent Lectureship in connection with the College, a Trust has been constituted for that purpose; its income to be "administered and applied by the College Committee for the establishment and maintenance of a Lectureship, to be called 'The Angus Lectureship,' in connection with the said College, for the delivery of periodic Lectures on great questions connected with Systematic, Practical, or Pastoral

Theology, or the Evidences and Study of the Bible, or Christian Missions, or Church History, or Kindred Subjects."

It is further provided that the College Committee, in conjunction with the Trustees, shall once in two years, or oftener (should exceptional circumstances render it desirable), "appoint and engage a Lecturer, who shall ordinarily be a member of the Baptist denomination, but who may occasionally be a member of any other body of Evangelical Christians, to deliver a course of not more than eight Lectures, on some subject of the nature hereinbefore mentioned."

In accordance with these provisions, the Rev. Dr. Angus delivered, at Regent's Park College, in the year 1896, a Course of Six Lectures on "Regeneration," afterwards published.

The Eighth Course, delivered at Regent's Park College in the year 1912, is contained in the present volume.

NOTE.—The sentences above marked as quotations are from the Deed of Trust, executed March, 1896.

PREFACE

IN the first book of *The Faerie Queene*, Spenser's heroine is Una, who is Truth. Her beauty is spiritual, and we see it tame the lion and soften the "salvage-men"—and this at first sight. Yet it is not till the end of the book that the Red Cross Knight realizes her beauty. He forsakes her; he is entrapped by Duessa, who is Falsehood; he is imprisoned in the Castle of Pride, and from this bondage it is Una that rescues him. Despair would have him kill himself; and she again rescues him, and leads him to the house of Caelia and on to Charissa, who is Grace, and thence to the hill of Contemplation. Then at last he is fit to slay the Dragon. The tenderness and healing power of Truth have rarely been so well drawn. On through repentance and forgiveness to the heavenly vision, Truth has brought her knight. Yet it is not till after

the desperate three days of battle with the Dragon that the Red Cross Knight sees Una without her veil.

> The blazing brightnesse of her beauties beame,
> And glorious light of her sunshyny face,
> To tell were as to strive against the streame:
> My ragged rimes are all too rude and bace
> Her heavenly lineaments for to enchace.
> Ne wonder; for her own deare loved knight,
> All were she daily with himselfe in place,
> Did wonder much at her celestial sight,
> Oft had he seen her faire, but never so fair dight.

"Our sage and serious poet" Spenser has grasped the fact that, while Truth captures us in the first instance by its beauty, we never realize that beauty till we have learnt in experience how much Truth can do for us, and how much we can do for Truth and can suffer for Truth. And in the allegory Una is not merely Truth, but the Christian Religion.

The old allegory stands; and it is a pity that men and women do not read the wonderful poem more than they do. There are those who can decide about Truth at first glance, or even without a first glance on *a priori* grounds, but Spenser knew better.

The drift of this little book is briefly this. In all modern study the emphasis falls on verification—on insistent reference to fact that can be tested and relied on. No other method is going to show the significance and value of the Christian religion—that greatest of all our traditions. Experience alone will tell us what it means. Here, I hope in a scientific spirit, it is urged that we familiarize ourselves with the mass of experience the Church of Jesus Christ has had of Him; and I believe that such a course will lead us on to experiment, and that when we, like the Red Cross Knight, have found what life in Truth is, we too shall share his wonder at the unsuspected beauty of the fuller vision.

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Πότερον ἐλθὼν αὐτὸς ἐξήτακας τοῦτο, ἢ πῶς οἶσθα;

Εἰκάζω, ἔφη.

Οὐκοῦν, ἔφη, καὶ περὶ τούτων, ὅταν μηκέτι εἰκάζωμεν, ἀλλ' ἤδη εἰδῶμεν, τότε συμβουλ-
-εύσομεν.

Socrates ap. Xen. *Mem.* iii., 6, 11.

THE CHRISTIAN TRADITION AND ITS VERIFICATION

LECTURE I

The Challenge to Verification

IT is a very long time since it was first pointed out that the Christian faith is untenable. There it stands—belief cast into the form of dogma, implying a unified view of the world, of all time, and all existence, and setting before men statements of the most amazing scope with reference to God and man and their relations to all eternity. But, in some particulars, it is not satisfactory, we are told; it goes outside what man can in any case know, and it rests on the preconceptions of a day that had neither criticism nor science; its terminology bears the stamp of its origin and proclaims how obsolete it all is. We are so conscious of the value of our own additions to knowledge, that a faith which seems to jar with them

is at once untenable. But this is not peculiar to us at all. We have only to go back to the eighteenth century—to what Gibbon in his magnificent way called "the reason and humanity of the present age"—to find the same attitude to the Christian Church and its creeds; and yet what seemed then a sufficient account of life to replace Christianity has by to-day a starved look—it seems a hard and low-pulsed sort of gospel or philosophy for any really human being.

A critic of some humour has suggested that the authentic words spoken by Adam to Eve, as they stepped through the gate of the Garden in Eden, were: "We live in times of transition." The habit has never been lost; we still live in times of transition. We have left the eighteenth century behind, and, it is urged, the first century a great deal further behind. The days are past when our fathers and mothers, in their quiet, easy way, could hold, unvexed by problems, the old Christian faith. Of course, such talk is frankly absurd. There never was a time when the Christian faith was unchallenged. By every sort of critic it has always been ques-

tioned, and there never was a day when it was easy to believe the Christian gospel* or to live the Christian life. The contribution of the Church to mankind would have been less if its venture into the unseen had been limited by the views of its critics.

We are still confronted in earnest with the Christian faith, whether we accept it or reject it. There are many who would welcome its final disappearance; there are many more who, while they think it may disappear, are not eager to see it go till they know better what is to take its place; some believe there is nothing to take its place at all, and deeply dread its going. And again, there are those who have not the least fear about the Church remaining and becoming a still greater force in human life.

But are we sure about the new factors operative more and more to-day in human thought? It is to these that I wish to give my first lecture. In the next two we shall discuss the place of tradition in sound think-

* My friend, Professor D. S. Cairns, quotes Principal Rainy's remark in his presence: "God never meant it to be an easy thing to believe."—*Life of Rainy*, ii., 117.

ing, and the general sanity of the Church in its methods of reaching truth and in its principles of verification. Then we shall turn to the actual experience of the Church, in the endeavour to learn what it really has been, to see what happened or happens still, and what has been the effect for mankind of the great tenets of the Church—particularly of its attitude to its Founder. The Founder Himself will be in our thoughts throughout, and in the last lecture an attempt will be made to lay down the lines toward a sounder realisation of His significance.

The Church never had a monopoly in shaping the thoughts of men, however near it may seem to have come to it in certain ages. To-day it seems further from it than ever. Into the great inherited body of thought that makes the atmosphere in which we live and move and think, and which conditions us and our thoughts in ways past finding out, new forces have come. There have been changes of the most momentous kind in the background of our thinking, in the nature of our thoughts, and in the very minds with which we think. The preconceptions with which we

start have been changed, and in a number of different ways.

First of all there is Natural Science, which has imposed its methods and its conclusions upon us, and has had as large a share in the new movements of our times and our fathers' as anything else. There has been unsettlement, uncertainty and fear. For there is a type of scientific man—not so common now, perhaps, as formerly, certainly not in the front ranks—who has rather a loud way of speaking, and speaks at times with insufficient recognition of other branches of study; and he has fairly done his part in emphasising, not merely the difference between science and religion, but his own strong opinion that religion is obsolete. Long ago Plato spoke of "a certain old quarrel between poetry and philosophy,"* and this is another of the same kind. The material to be studied is different, and the methods are different, as is necessarily the case when different aspects of reality have to be investigated; and the conservative instinct in man is always impatient of

* *Republic*, 607, B.

foreign method. The same intolerance, which is sometimes shown by students of science toward religion, is also shown, in measure, toward history, philosophy, and art, and it means no more than unfamiliarity. But this is not all; for, from time to time, great acquisitions of knowledge have been made, and securely made, which clash with particular statements long maintained with great confidence by the Church; and the question is asked whether (to take a simile from the sea) the Church's doctrine is in watertight compartments, and, even if so, whether enough of them have not been injured so badly as to sink her.

The first great change is associated with the name of Copernicus. It was understood that the Church was committed to the dogma of a flat earth and seven or more spheres. They had stood for twenty centuries, and Copernicus did away with them. Milton's works are, in English literature, a landmark of the change. He speaks of his visit to Italy: "There it was that I found, and visited the famous *Galileo* grown old, a prisoner to the Inquisition, for thinking in Astronomy other-

wise than the Franciscan and Dominican licensers thought." In *Paradise Lost* he recurs several times to the problem, leaning to the Copernican system, and leaving the Ptolemaic to Satan, who uses it naturally. It is clear that the Roman Church felt that something was at stake in spherical astronomy. With it the Neo-Platonists had connected their theory of the soul and its descent from God to earth; and with it was still bound up the destiny of the soul in a local heaven to which Christ had ascended.

After this came the geological trouble and the question as to whether Moses and his *Genesis* squared with the testimony of the rocks; and strange attempts were made to reconcile them. If such attempts are no longer made, it is because Christian thinkers have become content to do without the reconciliation.

But, serious as Copernicus and the geologists had seemed to orthodox thinkers, worse was to follow when Darwin and Huxley taught men to think in terms of evolution. A great epoch was made; but, as happens at such times, the great gains were misapplied because

of recklessness in their use. Everybody talked evolution who had a fancy for being enlightened or abreast of the times. Everything was referred to evolution, whether it had any relation with the sphere of Darwin's investigations or not. Wherever a progress could be observed, it was at once put down to evolution. Great play was made with heredity and environment and the rest of the terminology. I have even heard a woman explain that with modern girls tight-lacing was practically involuntary, because it was an inherited acquired instinct. What men of scientific mind thought of all this reckless talk we can guess. Nothing less scientific could be imagined. Darwin, after long investigation and thought, suggests a theory to explain certain things in Biology; and a horde of people seize it and apply it, without anything approaching Darwin's care for truth, to the most disparate matters in fields of study as widely removed as could be from the biological. Thought, morals, religion, were all suddenly discovered to be products of an evolution, apparently involuntary and inevitable. Developments could be observed in

these spheres of life, and that was enough. How those developments came is, however, a matter of history, to be studied with reference to the evidence; and the virtual abolition of effort, and, incidentally, of personality, was precipitate.*

When, after a number of years, a suggestion of the Bavarian abbé, Gregor Mendel, was revived, and deliberate experiments were made in the careful breeding of plants, birds, and animals, in order to ascertain, by definite and recorded steps, what changes are possible in the development of species, there were some further examples of swift thinking. Roughly speaking, the experiments have shown that the results obtained in breeding are not, if a wide enough range be taken, irregular or freakish, but may be more or less accurately reduced to mathematics—in short, that what you put in, you get out, re-combined variously, but symmetrically. You

* Mr. G. K. Chesterton, in his *Club of Queer Trades*, p. 236, wittily sums the matter up in the sweeping assertion that "the Darwinian movement has made no difference to mankind, except that, instead of talking unphilosophically about philosophy, they now talk unscientifically about science."

cannot, perhaps, predict the character of the offspring of a particular pair of mice, for some may die or other unnoticed factors may come in, but the general law seems roughly established. From this point one conspicuous exponent of Mendelism stepped by an apparently easy transition to a sweeping re-assertion of Determinism. So difficult it is to keep the scientific outlook steady, even when a man's work is so essentially a matter of close and exact verification as that of the Mendelists.

Meanwhile, in Psychology a very brilliant book caught the reading public, and we began to learn a new language. "Uprushes" and "the subliminal self" and "auto-suggestion" became terms as familiar and as precise as "justification" and "sanctification" had been three centuries before. Religion was explained at once—it was a matter of auto-suggestion. Certain questions, however, may be asked here, such as: How much is definitely *known* as to auto-suggestion? or is it really a splendid guess? Can there be auto-suggestion without reference to external facts with which the mind of the person concerned is more or less acquainted—in other words,

has the idea to be *suggested* to the *autos*, or does the *autos* suggest it to itself—which way does evidence point? Why should auto-suggestion, when it takes the form or direction of the Christian religion, work so uniformly toward sanity and morals: is there anything significant in the uniformity? and, lastly, What is *autos*—one of the oldest of philosophical difficulties? A solution of the problem of the nature of religion, which raises so many other problems at the first breath, does not take us very far.

All these new factors, however, are in the air, and the combined effect of them is very great. They make us feel once more and in a new way the "great Cloud" that came over George Fox in the Vale of Beavor, when "it was said; *All things come by Nature;* And," he adds, "the *Elements* and *Stars* came over me." Some of us have to "sit still under it and let it alone" a good deal longer than he had, before "a living Hope" rises in us and "a true Voice," to tell us; "*There is a living God, who made all things.*" There are so many more stars in three hundred years, and so many more elements, and so much stranger ones;

space is more vast to-day than ever Fox dreamed; and we are challenged more seriously than ever on the fundamental question as to whether man "comes by Nature," and is a mere product, or whether he has any spiritual freedom at all.

But there is more to be said, for the chief effect of the modern study of Natural Science has not been so much to challenge us with definite and established knowledge, or with theories of high probability and great brilliance, as to affect our habits of mind and our methods in thought. The scientific man is occupied in an investigation which avowedly affects only one small part of the area of all knowledge; his research is partial, he has a special subject, and his affirmation on his own subject is apt to be tentative and provisional; indeed, as he grows to be a master in his own department, it often happens that he is more and more reluctant to hazard any statement of scope or range concerning it without interminable qualifications. This habit of mind has passed over into other studies, and we have in common the weaknesses that go with it. The passion for accuracy is a noble one, but

if it be cramped in a very small sphere, a partial investigation, it results, unless a man is on his guard against it, in a certain failure of the imagination. This is not uncommon among specialists. The mind loses powers by perpetually dwelling on one subject —"that way madness lies," as Lear said. The atrophy of faculty does not make a man more competent to speak in his own department, still less of matters that lie outside it. But we constantly find a type of specialist who is contemptuous of studies and interests of which he is ignorant. With the best men it is very different.

Another weakness which we all share, as knowledge grows from more to more, is a lack of synthesis. One feature of Elizabethan England, as of Periclean Athens, was what has been called the "integrity" of the period. The same man touched all knowledge and all activity; he could write a poem, sail a ship, beat a Spaniard in fight or a Papist in argument—the world had a unity for him. For us the world is hardly a unity, except by logic; it is a series of bits, the relations of which we do not readily grasp. There is lack of

knowledge and lack of intelligence; in a word, lack of philosophy. Now the philosopher, as we know, is liable to err, and to err very badly—

> An innocent mind, but far astray—

he is liable to be very dogmatic, and to domineer with a truculence little short of that of the man of science at his worst. But to be content to lack philosophy is surely to abdicate manhood; yet we do it. We do not frame systems of thought for ourselves; we avowedly refrain from it; and yet, in a subtle and insidious way, they frame themselves for us; and such un-thought-out systems of thought are very dangerous, especially if we are people of books and laboratories, a little remote from ordinary life. But religion implies a certain amount of deliberate philosophy—it involves an ordered world, or a world getting moved in the direction of order, and a God at the top of it or in the heart of it, interested effectively in it, somehow; and it further implies a relation between this God and the man. Even to such a rudimentary philosophy a certain class of scientist is contemptuous again, and again for the same reason. It lies out-

side him, and it implies an energy of thought for which he has not braced himself. It runs counter to the presuppositions, the un-thought-out system, into which he has slidden.

This is the experience of very many of us —we have lost the sense of the whole in the fascination and interest of the part. Wordsworth, in his *Ode on Intimations of Immortality*, gives a picture of some such autobiography: how the vision splendid fades into the light of common day, as Earth, the homely nurse, doth all she can to make her foster-child forget the glories he hath known. And then, in the great stanzas that follow, where he speaks of "obstinate questionings of sense and outward things," the poet touches those experiences which challenge the narrow dogmatism of common sense and partial knowledge—which we can almost abolish if we give our minds to it, and the abolition of which will ruin us. Yet plenty of men seem to be imprisoned almost hopelessly in the zest of interests that frankly cover the smallest arc of the circle of life. The excuse is, of course, the vast range and difficulty of scientific work —a confession, in so many words, of failure.

On the other hand, there is a noble contribution which the scientific mind is making to the religious, a keen and quickened sense of truth and a passion for verification. And it is a curious situation when the man of science says to the disciple of Jesus of Nazareth: "Make sure; be sure that you know; look to it for yourself; verify." It is the method of Jesus Himself, and it will give us again "the deep and firm sense of reality," which, as Matthew Arnold pointed out,* characterises the thinking of Jesus; for "theory," as Arnold elsewhere says, "Jesus never touches, but bases Himself invariably upon experience."† If we are to do anything with religion, the first thing is to be done with preconceptions (as far as that is possible for man) and to learn what *can* be from what *has been* and what does occur. To this we shall have to return in the next lecture.

Let us pass on to another branch of study—a study full of the enthusiasm of youth and new methods—Social Science, as it is called,

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* Preface to *God and the Bible.*

† *Literature and Dogma*, ch. 7.

though the name is a large one, and perhaps not yet quite vindicated. We have been brought—and it is a good thing that we have been so brought—face to face in a new way with poverty. The poor we have always with us, but we have not been earnest enough in asking Why; and that we are now being told with vehemence, not unwarranted when men are so slow to listen. This is not the first generation, if it may be said with modesty, that has felt the problem of poverty; but men are probing more deeply into causes and factors, with a new alertness for evidence. The mind of the social student dwells on environment as the scientific man's on heredity, and the besetting sin of quick thinking, which haunts science and theology, is not unknown here. The problem of evil has taken on a new form for the social researcher and the social worker; and some of the evils they see are so obvious, and yet so much ignored, that their desperately quick remedies are intelligible. Delay is at the cost of life and mind and moral being; and the suggestion of the Church

that, by the Soul
Only, the nations shall be great and free,

is scouted more fiercely than it deserves to be. The moral evils of destitution are familiar to the social worker; and, if destitution were abolished, they would mostly disappear, he believes. It means once more that man is a product of heredity and environment, the outcome of forces and factors he cannot control; that the margin of spiritual freedom is extraordinarily narrow. That is very quick thinking. It is curious, too, to find such an approximation between the modern reformer and old Cephalos, in Plato's *Republic*, who was glad that he had been rich, because riches save a man from so much sin. The Church has always had a deeper view of sin than this.

Once again, the impression left on the mind is that of an immense range of knowledge to be explored and known. How many factors are there in the problem of poverty? how do they work, and how are their workings interwoven, and how are they to be measured? If History teaches anything here, it is the imperative need of the closest and most accurate thinking on the basis of the fullest knowledge—that we must go slowly. Yes, say our

friends, History is far slower than death and disease. Still, here again we are challenged to verification. Is it possible that the Christian Church or its critics can have overlooked factors of moment?

But we have invoked History, and History also is touched with the scientific spirit—if it is not, as some severe students of it urge, a science itself. The origins of the human race and the growth of nations are being investigated with more reference to facts than in the old days when, as the severe say, History flourished with Literature at her one elbow and Moral Philosophy at the other. What is race? Is Nature, after all, "so careful of the type"? In some quarters we are assailed with large statements about tall fair men and little dark men, dolichocephalous and brachycephalous, breeds with great differences of endowment; and we are warned that, if eugenics be not carefully studied, that balance between the ethnic varieties may be lost which makes England what it is. It is not, however, historians who talk in this way. History is a very long story for them; and they ask, quite honestly, because they do not know, whether

a race is a fixed type or a shifting type; whether differences of climate and food over long periods affect the cephalic index and the varieties of endowment; whether Anglo-Saxons were really Anglo-Saxons for many millennia before Julius Cæsar studied the Germans? and other questions. If everything is a matter of race—if temperament, religion, morality, art, genius, and the rest, all depend on race—then let us be sure we know something about it; for, at present, unless brilliant guesses based on evidence, that would be valuable if its relations were understood, be knowledge, we know very little about race.* It is another call to verification.

Of course, in dealing with race, the historian is defending himself against the popular biologist, but he sometimes needs defence against himself. There are the great world-movements in historic times—whole ages dominated by certain types of thought, in which, if a man appear who reaches too far into the future, he is useless, however truly he

* A distinguished anthropologist tells me I should have said that "nothing" is known about race.

may anticipate the actual developments of thought and life in generations after his own. At least, so it is said, and we do find men who were, as we say, before their time, though often, on closer investigation, it looks as if their anticipations were made rather by long jumps, and lacked the intermediate steps which make for real progress. Why is it that man moves so slowly, and is so desperately in bondage to his own day? One answer is that he is not in fact nearly as much in bondage to his day as he seems in retrospect. Yet the historian observes a relation between political and social conditions and thought—*e.g.*, under the successors of Alexander the Great and under the early Roman Empire, under Turkish sultans and Indian rajahs, philosophy leans to fatalism, as if the experience of arbitrary and incalculable government took the initiative out of men's minds and turned them toward submission without action. We find something of the kind in history, but we must be careful once more about sweeping statements. Men and peoples are under the influence of the old and middle-aged more than we suppose, and move slowly,

but most of the talk about the unchanging East (for example) is fortified by wide ignorance of Eastern history. The East does change, and man is no more the victim of place than of race, much as both influence him. The historian insists, like other serious thinkers, on much more earnest standards of verification than the journalist or the amateur.

A new factor in these generations is the comparative study of religion. It offers a most fascinating field of work. The great religious systems of the world have been studied with new sympathy and new knowledge, as their sacred books have become known in the West. Carlyle's treatment of Mahomet is a familiar landmark here—"a silent great soul; he was one of those who cannot *but* be in earnest; whom Nature herself has appointed to be sincere. While others walk in formulas and hearsays, contented enough to dwell there, this man could not screen himself in formulas; he was alone with his own soul and the reality of things. The great Mystery of Existence glared in upon him, with its terrors, with its splendours." Zoroaster and Buddha have become more

familiar and intelligible figures; we see what they meant and how they came to mean it. There is Hinduism, too, more intelligible in its turn when we know something of its history—not unlike Neo-Platonism. We are taught to realise the great elements in all these systems. And among the great religious teachers is Jesus of Nazareth—but here one is half tempted to quote Tertullian's sharp word: "Here human curiosity ceases to be inquisitive." It would not be strictly true, and yet how many popular critics of religion have troubled to give Him the full study that is needed to understand Him?

The problems raised by this comparative study of religions are many. Thus and thus, again and again, the minds of men have moved; monotheism and polytheism have battled together; great teachers have risen like Carlyle's Mahomet, and have been followed by disciples, and after a period of advance comes a decline. In one teacher and another we find great resemblances: the high faith, the ardent spirit, the tender and sympathetic heart; and there is a great likeness about their teaching in the sphere of conduct,

at least at first sight. We ask ourselves what these resemblances mean? Would it be possible for us to find truth by taking what the Stoics called the consensus of mankind, the "greatest common measure" (if that old arithmetical term survives) of all the religions? Will it serve us best to take what is common to all the great religious teachers, and to eliminate the rest, and to ask whether there is any difference between Buddha and Jesus Christ and the Báb? and, if there is, whether it matters? This sort of question is being asked, and a quick answer given. Yet, it is possible to ask, also, whether it is not the difference that chiefly signifies. Is Christianity made by what it shares with Buddhism, however much that is? As we get better acquaintance with the two systems the common element seems trifling in comparison with the gulf between the two outlooks on life and the world. Is what men have counted the very gist and essence of Christianity a mistake—the faith for which men have fought and died and been martyred?

We have here a fresh call to verification. We need to know vastly more about

Buddhism, and above all about the influence of Buddhism on life, about the actual teaching of Buddha in relation to current Buddhism, about the type of character that Buddhism produces, not merely among its ascetics, but among the people whom they influence or do not influence, and a great many more such matters.* Similarly, we must give ourselves to a fuller historical study of Christianity, not so much with controversy as our object as intelligence.

Of later years, the study of religion has reached another phase. We have been taken back in the most fascinating way to origins, and move with delight and interest among golden boughs, and totems, and thunder-birds, and divine kings, and heavenly twins. Many familiar conceptions have had their pedigrees traced back to very lowly spheres, and we are told—rather quickly—that most of our religious belief comes from magic and the like. It is not altogether proven that it is so, nor

* I should like to recommend here the book of Ekai Kawaguchi, a Japanese Buddhist monk, entitled *Three Years in Tibet*. There is an English translation, and it is a most interesting and illuminating work.

is it shown that, if a religious usage originated in a magical practice, or if a religious belief was at first no more than a superstition of the grossest kind, no development is possible, but that religion remains as it began, essentially magical. We have to remember the innate conservatism of our race, and how we love to associate the new with the old as if they were one. If the trellis is clearly magic, must the vine be magic? In ancient Italy the vine grew up a living elm: is this our analogy of religion and magic? Or is it safe to play with analogies? Is it certain that the ram's-horn of Folklore (to borrow a simile from the preface of a great work) will bring down the picturesque and ivy-clad walls of the Jericho we call religion? Is it not just possible that something escapes the student of Folklore, and that things are not so easy as the man of one subject comes to think? Once again, a challenge to verification.

But if we are to study origins, we shall have to look again at Christian origins. It is notorious that, for people who are in a hurry about their thinking, the Higher Criticism, as applied to the Old Testament, has shaken

the Christian faith, whether they are pleased with the result or unhappy about it. It will be more serious when they learn what it is doing with the New Testament. Yet the general principles of the Higher Criticism are sound and scientific, though this does not imply that every result produced by those who apply these principles to Old or New Testament, is finally true, even if many critics agree in affirming it. It is clear that wrong results from sound principles will not survive sound application of those principles. Here, as elsewhere, the remedy for wrong thinking is strong thinking, deeper thinking, and plenty of it, with constant reference to fact.

So far we have been dealing with the criticism of the Christian religion from the scientific side. The whole of it is open to the suggestion that there is too much of the laboratory and the study about it—it is too like Morphology as opposed to Biology; it does not come near enough to life and the living thing. Side by side with the man of science lives another type of man altogether, who does not understand him, and does not very much wish to understand him.

He is not interested in Chemistry or Geology—

> Enough of Science and of Art;
> Close up these barren leaves;
> Come forth, and bring with you a heart
> That watches and receives.

He knows the world in another way altogether, and he cannot believe that anyone knows it as well as he does, for no one enjoys it so much.

> The sounding cataract
> Haunted me like a passion: the tall rock,
> The mountain, and the deep and gloomy wood,
> Their colours and their forms, were then to me
> An appetite: a feeling and a love,
> That had no need of a remoter charm,
> By thought supplied, or any interest
> Unborrowed from the eye.

He lives in the beauty of the world, and, when you walk beside him and talk to him about your system, economic or philosophic, he listens in a way with the ear next you, but he sees something quite different. The grey willow against the copper beech—he sees these, and they both speak to him in voices too strong, too clear, and too truthful to let him care about anything else—not even if it is

a system of the universe that explains them. He feels, and he cannot help feeling, the beauty and the magic of a world of colour, the movement and the life of it; and these things come into his own life with a power and an intensity of which you do not dream, and yet you think you have them in your system. He cannot reply to your questions; he cannot give you a reasonable answer, or argue with your tools: his major premiss is something irreducible to formal logic, and his conclusion reaches to infinity and leaves out everything that you think should be in. As for your system, of what service is a system when a man only knows a dozen or two things in the world, and they baffle him because, however well he knows them, every now and then they break out into new doxologies; there is no end to their inexhaustible fertility of meaning and joy. Which of you knows the world? You with the system and the pedestrian mind, or he in rapture? He knows it in all its joy—

> The beauty and the wonder and the power,
> The shapes of things, their colours, lights and shades,
> Changes, surprises,—and God made it all!

Your system is a Christian scheme of things, perhaps, and he does not care about it; you do not see into the heart and life of things, he says; they move dimly for you, in a mist; they burn for him, and blaze and are bright —yes, painful sometimes, but it is worth it. You talk about shadows; and he handles realities.

He too turns critic, and, like a splendid pagan, is magnificent in denunciation of a drab and lack-lustre Christianity, a Christian Church that cramps and confines the spirit, that deadens everything it touches, that is afraid of this and of that, that dares not try life, does not realise, and does not know. He has reached the same point as the scientific man, and makes the same reproach. Our standards of truth and knowledge are too low and too dull, they both tell us. "You must go back to life," he cries, "until you know it from within, till it lives and moves again for you, if anything you say is ever to be worth listening to." He has put the same problem of verification before us in another way, the vast, wide range of reality, the awful and wonderful complex of things which we

must discover by feeling them, by living in them. Verification in earnest.

Attacked on two sides, by those who tell him that he does not know and by those who tell him that he does not feel, the Christian turns ruefully to his Master to see what has become of Him in all this. "We have believed what you told us; we have quoted it; and they sweep it aside and tell us we neither know nor feel!" And I think that if we could see His face, there would be something of a smile upon it—a suggestion of some kindly amusement at such anxiety. "Did I not tell you the same?" He asks, "That you must search and know, and feel, and judge for yourselves?" For Jesus Christ is not a teacher to be quoted, I think. If we quote Him, we use Him amiss. His words are nothing till they come somehow out of our own hearts again, as they did from Peter's long ago; they are not dead; they live. Our critics are bringing us back by their challenges to know Him Whom we have believed. They are bidding us test and examine and know ourselves and Him, and get our lessons from life and fact. It is His own method after all.

In the lectures that follow, that is to be our task. Brokenly and strugglingly, we are to try all the same to get some glimpse, some idea, of what things are. Not results or conclusions are to be our immediate aim, but a method, an approach that will bring us into the real and to the Master of it.

LECTURE II

The Use of Tradition

IN the previous lecture we tried to face the great challenge made to the Christian community by modern thought and modern learning. We saw that our religion is challenged along many lines. The man of science, the economist, the historian, the critic of the Bible, the poet—all bring against us an accusation that we do not take pains enough to verify what we tell them so easily we believe. "How much of what you assert do you *know?*" asks one school of critics. "How much of it do you *feel?*" asks the other. We are driven back upon a fresh study of the facts.

What are the facts, then, upon which we rest? What are the facts in religious experience?

Whether there be truth in the Christian religion or not, our first fact is a world-wide society, with a history of nineteen centuries. It touches every part of life, conditions and

suggests our thoughts, shapes us, and makes a background for us—and all this in ways that are beyond our reckoning or our understanding—so that we can hardly think of ourselves apart from the fact of the Christian Church and its influence. As we look at it, we are challenged again with a series of questions. Are we to dismiss all this? Is there nothing for us in the long story of the Christian community? Is it possible that nineteen centuries of human experience have nothing to say to the heir of all the ages?

> The souls of now two thousand years
> Have laid up here their toils and fears,
> And all the earnings of their pain,—
> Ah, yet consider it again!

There the great fact of the Christian Church stands, and we have to ask ourselves if we know what it means. We shall not know what it means till we have grasped how it came into being, and what is the inmost significance of its doctrines and its faith; till we understand the mind of its great sons and daughters, till we realise something of their individuality, who they are that have held the Christian faith, and how they have held

it. We have to think out our attitude to the Christian past, remembering that, if we decide that it means nothing, the decision carries with it extraordinary consequences. For it will be hard to say what can mean anything to us if nineteen centuries of the intensest life of the most living part of the world are to go for nothing. We have to study the Church till we discover how the Christian community has historically reached its present position, and not only that, but how it still can hold it as it does. Have Christian thinkers after all never felt the improbability —the incredibility—of what they say? What is it that has brought men to this, and still brings them? Why do men lean so to the Gospel? Why do they love it as they do?

This means that we have to begin by turning to the past and studying its contribution — the inherited element in religious thought. There are other religions beside Christianity; and, if we are to be sure of our results, we shall have to go further and consider what canons we have for judging between one religion, or one body of religious belief, and another.

The term "religion" is used with some ambiguity of meaning. It may connote chiefly ritual or cult; but with these we are not primarily concerned for our present purpose. It may, again, suggest a more or less ordered body of belief; or it may mean only and solely the experience that men actually have of God —their contact with Him, direct or indirect, and their consciousness of Him as a factor in life. These two latter senses of the word touch one another very closely. The Christian Church rests, deliberately and consciously, upon its own experience of God in Christ, and it has embodied this, so far as it could, in its creeds and dogmas. And these, without refinements in the ecclesiastical way, we may group, at least for the present, as the Christian tradition. The term, then, will be used in this general and larger sense of the whole body of essential Christian belief, as commonly held by all sections of the Christian community, and pointing to the full volume of Christian experience.

It is, of course, obvious that, here as elsewhere, experience and the formulation, expression or explanation that it receives, are

distinct things—that is, however closely they go together, we can think of them apart, and it is also clear that one of them is more important than the other. The one is concerned with action primarily—with what a man does in daily life, with the spirit in which he lives and in which he prays, in which he manages his dealings with man and God. The other is more closely connected with speculation. Of course, it is here as in other spheres; practice and theory act and react on each other; dogma and religion affect each other. What a man believes conditions what he does; what he does conditions what he believes. Action is impossible without some working theory, and this very fact drives earnest men into speculation. Even the man of science is never without some kind of tentative working hypothesis, even when, in the most disinterested and objective way, he is investigating fact; he is looking for something, and that directs his search. We cannot take the tradition of the Christian Church—its body of belief and dogma—apart from its experience, however distinct the two things may be.

At the same time we have to remember that the spheres of action and speculation are still different. Very often in all the affairs of life we find that the man who is master in the one sphere is helpless in the other; and so it is with religious life and thought. Many a man has the power and has the life, who can give no account of it, or who can only account for it in borrowed terms, crammed with metaphor—terms more or less intelligible to those who understand the metaphors, and hopelessly dark for others. Similarly, men may be adepts in the speculative treatment of religion, and have little enough of the real thing in the way of power or life. One part of our task, then, will be to make sure of the relation between the tradition and the experience behind it, for it may be that the Church has not quite managed a perfect account and explanation of its own life.

The Christian Church, in its history as in all its daily transactions, is conscious of a life related in a peculiar way to the historical facts given in the Gospels. Of this life it has to find some account; and this account must be given with reference to its whole knowledge

of the world. Otherwise it remains more or less unknown and unintelligible. This is the common instinct of men. Speculation is native to us—"the un-examined life," Plato said, "is un-live-able for a human being."* We are always seeking to bring the whole of our experience into relation with itself, that we may grasp the whole of life and the universe, so far as they touch us, with some unity and inward coherence; and it is never a merely academic task, the impulse of an idle curiosity. It is intensely practical. The Church in its dogma endeavours to formulate its experience in the religious sphere in connection with its general experience of life and the universe, and of the laws of life and the universe, taken as a whole, and it does this with the practical aim of proceeding thereby to some larger working theory of the divine order, on which to base action.

In common life, however, there is a curious tendency to be remarked here, in striking contrast with the ways of the scientific world. The man of science frames hypotheses to

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* *Apology*, 38 A.

account for the facts he has observed, and to enable him to proceed further; but he is wedded to no hypothesis. When new facts — or old ones better known — falsify his hypothesis, he abandons it for a new one, which in turn will condition his work, give a new direction to it, and call his attention steadily to some group or type of facts. But whatever theory he forms must be more or less immediately verifiable by experiment. Now, though the description may seem fanciful, experiment, one might say, is essentially listening to the voice of Nature—sometimes by long, still, and silent observation, by simple watching, as the modern student of birds watches them alive and at liberty; while sometimes the experiment takes the form of putting questions to Nature and then carefully catching the answer. It is a helpful thing here that one may put the same question to Nature as often as one pleases; and, if it is the same question, she will give the same answer. She will not tire of giving the answer, as sometimes happens when you put the same question to the same person an infinite number of times. Thus it is possible to be sure of her

answer; and, when a great many people put to her the same question, it is possible to verify it. Thus by repeated and intelligent listening Science comes into possession of a body of established facts.

The results of scientific experiment are patent to sense. Of course, the values of these results are not so patent. They require sometimes a vastly higher power of intellect to grasp them in their relation to one another, and to the whole body of established fact, than is required to make the experiments from which they are gained. But in the main the results of scientific experiment are patent and clear, and they lead to the establishment of facts which any competent person can verify. In this field theories are theories admittedly—working hypotheses to use or discard as serves best. A clear distinction is drawn between facts established by experiment and what are avowedly theories; and that distinction permits a considerable freedom in the use of hard facts, and makes the progress of Science possible in virtue of clear thinking.

But now let us turn to the other side and look at religion. Here we step into a region

of great difficulty, for we have to do with the innermost secrets of human nature. We really know very little yet even of the familiar five senses; still less can we claim any satisfactory knowledge of the secrets of psychology—will, feeling, emotion, impulse, perception, attention; and there are elements in human nature still more perplexing and still less explored. Of the great spiritual experiences, such as love or sorrow, it is hard to give even an approximately true account, except perhaps in poetry. Somewhere, deep among the innermost things of our being, is the home of what we call religion—in a region where experiments seem hardly possible, and, even when they are possible, the results are peculiarly difficult to understand and to relate to one another. Some measure of experiment is, of course, possible here; but here more than elsewhere we require the intelligent working of independent witnesses, independent investigators, correcting themselves and correcting one another, by independent results taken over long periods and wide areas, if we are to eliminate accident and error. Yet precisely in this sphere we find

sometimes the most careless use of theory and fact as if they stood on the same footing. There are those who freely use their own theories in this way; and there are those who lay an emphasis on the authority of the Church, which seems as alien to scientific thinking. To the former class we scarcely need to attend, but we have to consider the stress laid on Authority and to ask how far it is legitimate.

One reason lies ready to hand. It is partly because of the great difficulty of the problem that lies before the individual—because of the vast issues bound up with it and the short space within which it has to be solved—because he feels so acutely his limitations. He stands in a world of many minds, none of them quite rigid, however rigid they may seem—all of them in reality played upon by shifting currents of thought and feeling, and conditioned by sterner variations in experience. Nothing that he can see stands immovable and immutable, and he asks for something that is permanent. For he realises that he is face to face with a practical problem. He has a life to live which is hurrying past

him faster and faster—a life which he would like to call his own, but, as he thinks of it, he seems to himself more and more to be a mere spectator, so quickly life goes, and so little does it leave. He is hindered from developing his opportunities by failure within himself. Evil round about him is challenging his energies, but they are thwarted and deadened by evil within; and meantime he is swept down-stream, more and more conscious of failure—yes, and of ignorance of himself and his own nature. How is he to use life, to overcome the inner weakness that makes the outward inefficiency—in short, to be what he feels dimly he should be, and might be, somehow, if he only knew how?

The difficulty of life lies, after all, not so much in the region of speculation as of action —that is, unless a man is content to drift through his days and nights, eating, sleeping, and thoughtlessly putting his hand to what occurs, without purpose or outlook. There may be perhaps an art or science of war—or perhaps Socrates would call it, like rhetoric and cookery, a mere knack. In the last resort many arts and sciences have a larger element

of knack in them than human pride would wish to recognise. However, if there is an art or science of war, it is not to that that we should liken life, but rather to the conduct of a siege—an affair of sore straits and cramped means, spiritual, intellectual, and moral, and the enemy always at the gates.

In all such cases a man has a tendency to fall back on the experience of other men. The instinct is a sound one. Whether one consider the history of inventions, of art, of literature, or of politics and freedom, the inheritance at times seems everything. On what background does a man work? What depth of leaf mould is there in which literature may root itself and flower? The answer often determines the value in each case. In literature, for instance, Goethe said that "to make an epoch in the world, two conditions are notoriously essential—a good head and a good inheritance."* The man who will emphasise himself and swing clear of the conventions of the race is not so often the real genius as the crank or the pretender. The

* Eckermann, *Conversations with Goethe*, 2 May, 1824.

inherited experience of mankind, scarcely formulated, and reduced to no very valid rules, is invaluable to the real artist, who absorbs it he cannot tell how or when. It saves him from gratuitous mistakes, from waste of mind, from eccentricity, from disastrous side-tracks, and by its gentle pressure turns him in that direction where, if he follow his genius, he will instinctively know when to overstep convention and so to extend the experience he inherits, and to enlarge in a permanent and true way the faculties of the race. In fact, much as the individual is—and at times he in his turn seems to be everything—he is most when he realises and uses the solidarity of human experience in that sphere in which he has to work.

The experience of the race and the freedom of the individual—these, then, are the two great things for the man who takes life seriously in any sphere—neither without the other, but the combination of individual experiment with inherited experience.

Let us take an easy illustration. Man's struggle with Nature began far earlier than any date to which historians can take us back;

and long after it began, and yet long before we have anything we can call History, the first boat was made. We have to use conjecture here, but we have some evidence. The man who made it was one who watched Nature. The tree trunk floated, he saw, while the stone sank; and he took in these facts and thought he might use them. But the trunk had to be cleared of its branches, and after a while it occurred to him that if it were hollow he might convey himself and his belongings—human and other—with more safety and at least drier. So he thought out a new application of fire—that treasured discovery of his race, so hard to get, so important to keep; and then, after a long series of failures perhaps, with fire and stone he made his dug-out, and launched it with the aid of his friends. And then, to their great amusement, the tree trunk, afloat and free, turned over and resolutely floated upside down. But the man would not be beaten. He hauled the wretched trunk out of the water, and at last, by a heart-breaking course of thought and experiment and disappointment, achieved a new and a great thing—a tree

trunk hollowed within and shaped without to just those curves and just that build (to use a later word) that would enable it to stay right side up and hinder its own progress least. Human life might depend upon both these qualifications. So rose the most wonderful and fascinating of human trades, to which man was to owe some of his most amazing victories over the world. The man who made the first boat in any tribe was of the type to which mankind owes most—the listener to the voice of God in fact and Nature. He was done with anticipating; he would have the fact, and he put himself to the pains of letting the fact assert itself—patient enough to ask again and again till he understood what Nature meant, and then using it gloriously. Back to him and his boat we can trace the story of shipbuilding, and from him again downwards to our *Mauretanias* and *Olympics;* and at no stage has the past with its triumphs been irrelevant—nothing once gained was lost, and it is only as men build their ships true to the discoveries made all the way along from the first dug-out that they build aright. The past is superseded indeed; the *Mauretania*

is worth many dug-outs, but in her the dug-out lives still in a more glorious life. It is the combination of experience and experiment.

So, too, when, at a later day, seas were to be navigated, the sailor did the same thing. The quiet man who would watch and listen learned how to shape his course. Without chart or compass, without even an anchor, how was he to know where he was, to find his way, to save his ship? He looked and he listened. The stars spoke to him, and he went to his journey's end and came back again because he had the genius to listen to them—and to sea and winds and coastlines and currents. The moods of the sea and the face of the sky were never idle for him; and what he learned, he taught, and navigation developed. "A new boat and old rocks," says the grim Highland proverb. The old perils remain, but the sting is drawn from them if you will use what your father told you. Once more it is the experience of the race and the experiment of the individual.

When we turn to the sphere of religion, it is natural to expect that the same method will

still serve us best, for there is a certain unity in our acquaintance with the universe. Life is one, however many its aspects and faculties. Nature will speak to us here also, if we will listen. But we must be careful not to be in a hurry. It is here that hurry seems most natural to the human mind and most disastrous. How intricate are the relations of experience and the formulation given to it, we have seen. With the most earnest passion for truth, men may misconceive it and misrepresent it; and in religion we may be misled by the very highest tradition available to us. Verification here is slow work and very hard; yet it is possible, if we are willing to avail ourselves of the accumulated evidence of mankind, with all the care and sympathy needed to understand it aright.

So far as we can trace the history of man's conception of God, it has grown very slowly, and in a very simple way. It would be a wonderful thing to re-capture, if we could, the very thoughts of those remote ancestors of ours who first formulated their experience of Something-Not-Themselves, and to trace how, age by age, men re-shaped their ideas

of the great Environing, as they watched how thought re-acted on life, and life on thought. The real progress has been made by attention to fact. This and that, men said, their fathers had told them, but quite other was the voice of life; God was not what was said, but what He showed Himself to be, what He revealed in the growth of moral and social ideas and ideals. Thus in Homer the traditional gods are clearly on a lower moral plane than the heroes men made from their experience of their fellow-men. It is plain to us in looking back that Homer's gods were outgrown and must yield their place sooner or later. The attack made by Xenophanes, Euripides, and Plato on traditional religion in the light of new experience of righteousness is the great instance in Classical literature and history of the progress made by those who inherit and examine and reflect. God was re-interpreted in the light of life. Strange that what men are is so often a better guide to the nature of God than what they say about Him!

Progress in the spiritual region depends on the result reached by the individual when he is not merely an individual but a joint-heir

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of the race, and will use his inheritance without losing his personality. Robinson Crusoe on his island is hardly a type of the human soul. We are too individualistic—too apt to forget that Robinson Crusoe had an axe and a number of other fascinating things brought from England, all of which implied humanity, and the long history of civilisation. He had also a Bible in English, we may remember, which again implied a long history of religion. The individual inherits all this—he is made by it; it is in him; and sound thinking requires the recognition of this fact also, as well as all other relevant facts, in the fulness of its meaning. Without the religious history of the race behind us, not one of us is likely to achieve anything, either in his own religious life or in his thinking. If he starts afresh, he is most like an artist who begins without perspective, and ignores all that has been learned and felt of colour. Not even genius could thrive on such a plan; and it is perhaps worth while remarking that one of the most significant factors in genius, and one of those least recognised, is its infinite capacity for learning in patience and humility,

however high it may soar afterwards—its power of combining docility with independence. Independence without that docility is the mark of the fool, though he does not always recognise it. First-hand experience of life, of course, we ask of poet and painter, and of the man of religion, but in the first instance within the limits of the inheritance.

When we speak of our religious and spiritual inheritance, we must think not merely of those who say they have the Voice of God, but of some who make no such claim—not merely of one Church, but of many, and of many that no Church at all will recognise. The whole spiritual history of man is the background on which we have to work. There are the great historic religions of the world, and within Christendom the great Churches and societies and movements—and none of all these is irrelevant. For, after all, "the Church" is essentially the tradition, and the tradition has to be transcended; while to the man who is in earnest, every tradition is of value, and none is finally binding. Church or no Church, it is to the highest experience in the sphere with which we are

concerned that we have to look, and it is not till we have found that, that we may dismiss anything as irrelevant, and even then we must not dismiss it too abruptly. For most of us to-day there is little question that it is in the area of Christian thinking that the highest results in thought and character are to be observed; and, when we find these, we are right—indeed, we are bound—to ask how they have been developed. It is, of course, true that this conclusion is questioned. Other standards of morality, by which to test character, are proposed, but they are rarely as new as those who advocate them imagine; often they are obsolete—blind alleys long since labelled and known to lead nowhere.

To recapitulate the three points we have reached, we have remarked, first, the solidarity of the race, and the dependence of the present, and with it of the future, upon the past and its experience. In the next place, we have seen that progress depends upon the right and wise use of the inherited experience by the individual, conscious of his responsibility at once to maintain and to advance

what he has inherited;* and, at the same time, that in every sphere of human activity it is the highest achievement that counts, and must be our starting-place for further progress; that, if to ignore experience is always folly, it is still more folly to ignore the highest experience available. In the third place, embodied in the tradition of the Christian Church or Churches, and in the teaching and dogma of the non-Christian religions, we have a mass of religious experience which may be of the highest value to us, if we take the pains to understand it; for here we touch the life of the human race at its very highest and most intense. The great religions express the most earnest minds among those races of man which are most endowed with insight and most trained in variety of life. They come not from the backward peoples, but from the races with long histories, embodying every interest that race or nation can

* The Church, wrote Principal Rainy in 1867, "is compelled to submit afresh to the cross-questioning of the ever-changing, ever-moving, Providence of God. She is obliged to let drop the mere habits of her history, which suffice no longer. . . . The Church of Christ has no liberty to become the slave even of its own history." (*Life*, i., pp. 176, 177.)

know, and in every one of the great religions the signs are manifest which tell of roots deep in the past. In each case the highest thought of a gifted race has been turned upon what supremely matters to every man. For those who know it best—who know it from within—the Christian faith stands apart from all other religions in a place of its own, with a future—and a future which, we believe, will not be a mere repetition of the past. The rest of this lecture will be devoted to a short discussion of principles which may enable us to judge between one set of religious traditions and another, and (I hope) to see some ground for the preference given to the Christian faith.

There are three questions which we may ask about any religion—quite simple questions. What will it do for you? What will it do to protect other people against you? How far does it hold open the door for the future?

In answering such questions two ways may be taken. We may go to sacred books, and compare the precepts of the great religious teachers and the proverbs bearing on moral matters that are current among the various

peoples. Or we may go to the people themselves and study their lives and see how far the religion is practically operative there—what it gives them, what it does to protect the weak from them, what it does to safeguard the future—and with what force and power it does these things. We shall find sometimes that the popular proverb has more vitality than the religious aphorism or principle, and yet that even so a proverb has often enough to do to maintain its own life, without dynamic to spare to guide and quicken the lives of men and women. We must keep always in close contact with actual life, and work out our problem with progressively intense study of individual character, without neglecting, on the other hand, the notes of the larger or more organised society. We must make it our concern to go slowly about our work—especially when we reach the stage of making statements—till we have grasped the fulness of the fact. In religion a fact is extremely hard to convey in its fulness by any words available; and then we have to realise that other people use the same words and mean something very different. The content of the

word varies immensely. Even when we take so simple and obvious a word as (let us say) "blue," no one can tell what its exact value is—it makes all the difference whether it is applied to a blue-bottle fly, the summer sky, or a preparation for the laundry. The word "Father" is applied to God in many religions, and its compass varies as widely as "blue" in the three instances I have suggested. It is clear that we have to go beyond what people say, and study what they mean, and how much they mean it.

Some little time ago, Professor Gilbert Murray, of Oxford, said that the great danger in literature was reading "with a slack imagination." This is always the danger, whether one is criticising a book or dealing with human character in any form or race. Knowledge, to be anything at all beyond conceit and delusion, must be a thing of passion and intensity. It is not easy to understand any man in his fulness—character is so complicated to begin with, and in the next place it is never finally fixed. If we are to study an author, there is only one way, and this Carlyle summed up in writing of Novalis for an

English public very doubtful about such foreigners:

"The most profitable employment any book can give them is to study honestly some earnest, deep-minded, truth-loving Man, to work their way into his manner of thought, till they see the world with his eyes, feel as he felt and judge as he judged, neither believing nor denying, till they can in some measure so feel and judge."*

When we have taken such a course with any religious teacher, our acceptance or rejection, our belief or denial, will at least be defensible. Is it too much to suggest that such measure is only seldom given to that wonderful series of "earnest, deep-minded, truth-loving Men" who have made the Christian Church, and handed down to us its tradition—the embodiment of the religious experience of the peoples and of the men in nineteen centuries who were best qualified

* Dr. Edward Caird, in a lecture on Carlyle, said much the same thing: We must "let his way of thinking [a great author's] permeate into our minds, until it becomes part of their very substance"; till then, our criticism "will be wanting in sympathy, and it will rather tend to defend us against his spirit than enable us to appreciate it."

for such experience, even if most conscious of their own disqualifications?

Our task is the open-hearted study of the Christian religion, with our three questions in mind; and this lecture shall end with the suggestion of some lines along which our study may be carried out.

First of all, I would suggest the consideration of the Christian tradition by reference to the world outside Christ—and that is not easy. Most of us have no idea at all what the world is without Christ; He is so deeply involved in every aspect of the world we know, so interwoven with every fibre of its being. Yet there are two regions where we can see the world without Christ. There is the ancient world, with the fascinating story of the Greek and Roman civilisations in which our own is rooted. And again there is the modern world of Africa and Asia—the pagan world of to-day. To know either is the task of a lifetime, it may sometimes seem to the weary student, and yet certain things are plain enough.

For example, deplorable as things are in European and American society, they are bad,

nevertheless, with the continual correction of a Christian background. There are men and women leavening these societies in whom burns a passionate devotion to the person of Jesus Christ and His ideals for mankind and for the individual. There is the public recognition (whatever it is worth) of religion, and there is in all educated persons some slight knowledge—very vague and inaccurate as it may be—of the principles of that religion which touches their lives, if nowhere else, in most of their weddings and funerals. But imagine the background removed, and industrial enormities, flagrant cruelty, and open uncleanness, continuing unchecked, and gaining rather than losing in volume, as they would. Even with the assistance of Leopold II. and his Belgians, it will be hard for anyone without special knowledge to imagine what things were tolerated in ancient society —or are tolerated in India—in civilised communities, that is—and in neither case with much disapproval. Some things are ignored, and others are defended; and that makes an unspeakable difference. Good natures and kind hearts there were in the ancient world,

but it is remarkable how little influence they had.* Classical scholars and modern missionaries rarely tell all they know about pagan society. Few ask about the condition of slaves, for instance, in the mines of Attica while Pericles was the chief man of the State; and the terrible want of mercy that caste involves is not understood. If you know the questions to ask of returned missionaries, they will tell you. Sometimes they tell you things without noticing that they are doing so, and such evidence is always significant.

Then we must think about religion without Christ. Here, of course, we meet people who go at once to the *Diary* of Marcus Aurelius or Sir Edwin Arnold's *Light of Asia*—documents of very different value. But there are sounder works on Buddha, with less glamour, while Marcus Aurelius was in any case an exceptional man. Plutarch's book *On Isis and Osiris* is a much better guide to the real ideas of ancient religion. Two features stand out in most non-Christian religions—the world's quarrel with God, and the awful touch of

* Think of the gladiatorial shows and the kind and humane men who gave them.

superstition. Buddha and the Stoic both knew the world was made amiss, and, reconciliation being practically impossible, they urged renouncing the world. The Stoic, of course, with his love of paradox, simultaneously maintained the beauty and rightness of the world, but, none the less, did his utmost to nerve himself to endure it. Buddha, it might be said, beyond all religious teachers, takes the worth out of life. If it is urged that the mediæval monk also said that "the world is very evil,"* none the less, the hymn, in which the phrase comes, ends with "Jerusalem the Golden," while the Stoic ended with resolution into elements and Buddha at best with Nirvana. The plain fact is that, in the long run, despair is at the heart of every religion without Christ; and if man or woman is to get through the world at all, it must be by the hardening or deadening of the more sensitive parts of human nature. Marcus Aurelius' *Diary* is a sort of breviary of despair.

Epicurus and Nietzsche have a different story to tell, but their messages have the same

* To be fair to Bernard of Morlaix, he did not say this. *Hora novissima tempora pessima* is rather different.

defects. They are not for people who outlive youth, or who have it in them to love in any passionate way; and as old age and love are obvious elements in human life, it is a damaging criticism upon a philosophy to say that it does not cover them. Besides, Plato dealt with Nietzsche long ago in the *Gorgias*, and Epicurus really asks more self-discipline than youth or voluptuary would wish to practise.

In the fifth lecture I shall have to deal with another aspect of religion outside Christ—with polytheism in faith and cult and daily life—and to call your attention to its effects upon human nature.

In the next place we have to study Christian society to see what has been done for men by Jesus Christ, and what is being done. We will not blink the weakness and distractedness of Christian society, but as weakness and distractedness are not features peculiar to it, we will look elsewhere for the factors that differentiate. Two lectures in this course will be given to this.

Several things will be necessary. We shall need to give a closer attention to Christian phrase, neither surrendering to its appeal of

old association, nor rejecting it as merely conventional. Here again we have to guard against the slack imagination, and to wrestle with the word, and with the man who uses it, till we grasp what it is intended to express. Over and over again we shall find that the difficulty is that it was an endeavour to put a wholly new experience into old phrase. Old categories and old conceptions have received a new content, far too great for them. The Church has treated its words like Humpty-Dumpty in *Alice Through the Looking-Glass;* the word has had its own associations and preferences, and the Church forces it, in spite of all these, to convey an idea it never meant to suggest—sometimes an idea of glowing joy. And then, when the word has learned its new work, dull folk use it till an impatient age supposes it never meant anything but flabby make-believe.* Really, if the words are to be understood, our best plan is to repeat the experience which called them forth.

We shall have to study the involuntary convert—a person to be found in many

* Perhaps one might instance such words as faith, love, substitution, holy.

societies to-day, a man well worth our attention. He is of the type that does not mean to be converted—too candid to take things without examination, too true to move quickly—and then, like the Pearl Merchant in the parable, after all his experience of the beautiful and true, he finds something that goes beyond all—he gets outside his own old range, finds a new joy; and life, without his intending it or expecting it, is a new thing. But if we are to understand him, it will not be with the slack imagination.

Above all, we shall have to consecrate ourselves to a new and special study of Jesus Christ—His ideas and principles, and, what is vastly more, Himself and His personality.

Is His a religion that closes the door to the future? Or does it not rather hold the door open? In a great passage, St. Paul speaks of Christ as being God's "Yes"—"however many," he says, "the promises of God are, in Him is the Yes." The Christian religion is a religion of Yes, and all other religions, in last resort, are religions of No. Paul sees in Him the fulfilment of all God's promises—promises written in the books of

the prophets of Israel, no doubt, but promises written before their day in the very nature of the human heart, in its craving for something more, its hunger for love, its undeveloped capacities, and its growing demand upon the universe. The Yes for all these Paul sees in Christ.

We have to study Christ's effect in producing and broadening sympathy, in enlarging outlook and developing faculty, in making men more really men than they ever were before—larger, more humane, more gentle and tender, more open to the world, and stronger and more fit for new kinds of service—spiritual, social, and intellectual—in short, in a larger and fuller sense, more human. We have to see how He has laid more emphasis than any other religious teacher on the worth of human life, the beauty of human relations, the charm of the world about us—sometimes by direct teaching, sometimes by implication, and most of all by His influence exercised on those who love Him even when they are not very conscious of being influenced by Him at all. We have to realise that this has been the continuous experience of the Church, and in

ever a larger and deeper measure. The nineteenth century, it was said, was nearer Christ than the second was. Let us pray that the twentieth come nearer still. "Where the spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty," wrote Paul; and there is indeed liberty there—to go about the Father's house and to see everything belonging to the Father. The locked doors are few—and in some the keys stand waiting till we learn to turn them, while, as to others—"Knock, and it shall be opened to you." But, in general, it is: "Behold, I have set before you an opened door."

It is curious, too, to remark how, when a man is really under the influence of Jesus Christ, such influence does not, as between man and man, narrow or limit, but broaden him. The Holy Spirit, it is promised, is to guide us into all truth. We find, wherever Jesus Christ has been in reality, men have conceived of everything in a progressively larger and nobler way—have framed greater ideals of personal, social, and national righteousness, and achieved a new intellectual freedom.

But eventually our subject of study is Christ

Himself. We must go back to the historical Jesus—to the great Teacher who bade men go to the facts—"Tell John the things you hear and see"—and Himself the great fact for us, Who saves us at once from the hardening of tradition, and from the danger of being lost altogether in a world of theory and spindrift fancy. As long as He stands, we build on the Rock, we touch the actual and live in the real.

LECTURE III

The Significance of the Church as Witness

OUR subject in this lecture is the Christian Church; and what other has so many claims upon our interest and our study? Think of its long history, its permanence, its recuperative power, its force, its solidarity, its place and part in all human affairs; and, again, of the great succession of significant men that have made it. Whatever its origin and nature may be, the part it has played and still plays in the story of the race entitles it to a closer study than most people give it. We do not realise what it means; we take it for granted, in our idle way, and hardly even wonder that it should have lasted so long, or how it can have done so, or how it began.

The problem of the rise of the Christian Church in the Roman Empire in the face of a great religious system, hallowed by every emotion that the associations of family life

and national life, of literature and history, can give*—of a great imperial system hostile to it from Nero's reign onward—is one that may call for every faculty of intelligence, sympathy, and historical imagination and historical sense that we possess. Gibbon dealt with it in his two most famous chapters—the least satisfactory chapters of his masterpiece. We must be more friendly than he was to the Christian Church if we are to understand it—friendly as every historical student must be to the subject of his researches. *Sine ira et studio* is the phrase of Tacitus—yes, without anger and partisanship, but not without sympathy. We must go quietly and slowly about our work; hurry is fatal in historical study.

Then we have to ask what has kept the Church together so long, and kept it one, in spite of the gulfs of controversy that separate Protestant and Catholic. We know quite well that in the last resort we stand together and

* The volume of emotion and the variety of association that made the strength of the old religion are to be seen in Plutarch. Men, he says, were "in anguish and in fear lest Delphi should lose its glory of three thousand years," and it had not lost it.

believe in one another. When one thinks of the great philosophic schools of the past—how small their numbers have been in spite of their great influence—how they disintegrated and disappeared, as the Stoics, for instance, did after the reign of Marcus Aurelius—one realises the contrast in the Church. Its numbers have been vast—they are greater to-day than ever; its divisions have been more acute and more cruel than those of any philosophic school; and yet it lives. We shall have to ask in virtue of *what* it lives, and to see that we reach an adequate answer. What is it that revives the Church again and again? What is the meaning of the great movements associated with such names as Luther, Tyndale, and Wesley—all these, men of the academic habit, who studied in Universities and read Greek—not at all our common idea of leaders of mass-movements? There is no secret at all about these men—they were fallible like ourselves, liable to the charges of anger and narrowness of view and mistaken judgment, what you will—but they have this also in common, that they all lived in the power of a renewed realisation

of Jesus Christ. That is plain enough. We have to ask ourselves why should this be responsible for new eras in Christian life and thought—and again we have to look to it carefully that we really answer our question.

To some critics the most conspicuous thing about the Church is its weakness; and in a certain sense they are right. The Christian Church has many weaknesses—some which its critics see better than it does itself, and some which it knows and they do not know. Its record is disfigured with terrible errors and follies; and at times it has been guilty—sections of it, at least, have been guilty—of what must be called crimes—crimes against its Founder, against the love of God, against ordinary humanity. We need not play the apologist, or seek to palliate such things, or to explain that wrongdoing was right when viewed from some peculiar standpoint or other. We may take the thing on the showing of the most hostile and the unfairest critic we can find; and then we must still more resolutely ask how it is that a body capable of such weakness, of such error, of such betrayals of its own ideals, can yet win and keep the

love and the loyalty of men and women, in earnest with themselves and with truth, and can affect through them the whole course of human history—we believe, for good; but, if our critics will not let us say so at once, we will ask only, To what does a body so conspicuously worthless owe its influence?

Let us take an illustration from ordinary history—Julius Cæsar. We will read the worst that is to be said about him; we will draw him as Shakespeare drew him, from North's *Plutarch*—a man of conspicuous errors and defects—epileptic, deaf, ambitious, vacillating, arrogant—falling far short in some matters of ordinary standards of conduct. Or we will take Martin Luther, and, for the moment, try to believe every foul calumny that the meaner partisans of the Papacy and of modern culture have heaped on him. And then we have a problem indeed. We have now to explain how such a Cæsar and such a Luther were capable of such great things as they actually achieved. They changed the course of human history. We will allow all that sense will tolerate to tendencies of the times, as people tell us to do to-day—people,

it seems to me, who do not always penetrate quite into the depths of things. We will make every deduction that is historically possible; and then, weighing the real effect of these men, on a just survey of everything to be considered, we will wrestle with the problem before us. If they had been (as so many suppose) great men and true men, the explanation would have been easier; but the traducer has only effected this—we realise now, when we know at last the frightful deductions that have to be made, how great the men were in fact. The more weakness and vice we load upon them, the more we magnify the greatness that enabled them to do what they actually did, in spite of everything.

Similarly, the greater the errors of the Christian Church, the worse its failures in conduct, insight, and sympathy, in grasp of truth or sense of right and wrong—the more we have to explain. If the *minus* is so great, how great is the *plus?* What is it that gives the Church its power? That it has power and charm and influence, we can see at a glance, in the love men have for the Church, and in their hatred for it. Hate and love of such

force—that carry men so far—are never waked by anything weak and trivial; and there is no hatred and no love in human history equal to those which the Church has waked. Why? We have seen the weakness; we have to see the strength.

It is a commonplace in criticism—or it should be so by now—that the beginner is quicker to see what is wrong than what is right. The critics, as Disraeli said in a famous passage, are the men who have failed; and he is right—the best of them are men who would have created if they could—would have made the poem or painted the picture, but they did not. The man who does, criticises in another way—with an incisiveness far beyond theirs, and a tenderness and sensitiveness they cannot reach. But, in the main, the task of criticism for most of us—at least, when we are measuring ourselves against great things in art, or literature, or history, and it is wiser and kinder to leave the rest alone—is to find out what is right, how and why the thing is right, and what makes it right—what gives it its appeal—where its power lies. The critic will be better trained in the National Gallery

than in the Royal Academy. So if we are to criticise the Christian Church, to form a real judgment upon it, to be sound critics, not mere pickers of holes and triflers, we have to find out first where its strength lies. That is the vital question for Delilah and her Philistines when they are dealing with Samson; it is the vital question for the enemies of the Church, and they can do nothing till they solve it. And what it means for us who are committed to the Church of Christ, I need not tell you.

In this lecture I wish to concentrate attention upon three main points, from the consideration of which we may be better able to take some measure of the strength of the Christian Church, and to see what it means and what lies behind. First of all, I suggest that we should study more closely the way in which the Church holds its main doctrines, how it has come to do so, and what is its intellectual right to hold them; and incidentally we shall have to remark its inability not to hold them, in view of its invariable decline when it has loosened its grip upon them. In the second place, we must examine what these

main tenets are; and, lastly, their place in the actual life of the Church, their effect upon the conduct and method of the Christian community, and the general character of the results that have followed from their use and application.

I begin, then, with what I may perhaps call the Sanity of the Christian Church.

On this point, the first thing to be said is that the Christian community has always rested on the validity of human experience. There are people, of course, who have maintained the doctrine that this is not a sound basis, that there is, in fact, no sound basis at all for knowledge, but that knowledge is impossible. How they can *know* this is not explained. However, the Church has always based itself on the belief that through experience you can learn, and that you can definitely and quietly conclude that certain things are true. There is reality in the experience of men, and knowledge is possible. From the way in which things can be done, and also from the ways in which they cannot be done, the Christian Church believes that it may learn something essential and vital.

The story of mankind is not for it an idle thing,

a Shadow-Show
Played in a box whose candle is the Sun—

as empty and meaningless a sequence as a series of smoke-rings blown by an idle man, one after the other going away, and none contributing to any before it or after it —a mere arbitrary succession of purposeless monotony.* On the contrary, Christian thinkers have always held that there is something that the mind can grip and use in the history of mankind—something valid and real; and the more vital and real, the more a man braces his mind to grapple with it and to understand it in its fulness. The Christian Church does not rest on what I have heard called Perhapsology. Hence, when a certain type of experience recurs again and again, it is taken to be significant, and not accidental; and, as a result, the Church calculates, in all its dealings with men, upon the recurrence of certain things. The human mind, with all

* This is unjust to the smoke-rings, every one of which, as well as the whole series, will point to natural laws which are not trifles.

its triumphs over the material world, and all its acquisitions of new knowledge, will continue to act in much the same way.* There will be the same obstinate questionings age by age—now turned upon this aspect of life, now upon the other phase of it; the same hesitations between theories of good and evil, the same wavering between the appeals of good and evil, the same weakness, and the same needs and cravings. And to meet these needs and cravings the Church offers the same Christ—in the certainty that, though the storms of criticism continue with greater or less violence to beat upon this or that element of the Christian faith, there still work for it the same forces, the same movements of the mind, that in ages past have taken and still take men, often sorely against the lines of their preference, into the same acceptance of God in Christ. I have forestalled here one of the great conclusions the Church draws, but the immediate point is rather the way in which it comes to draw it.

In the next place, I would urge you to

* "Mankind advances, but man remains the same," Goethe said.

consider that the conclusions of the Church have not gone unchallenged. The Christian community has not gone, like Odysseus' men, with wax in their ears, unable to hear the Sirens. It has lived in the world and heard all that the world has to say—whether it wished or not—the world took care it should hear. For it is rather curious to see how from the very first the world has devoted itself to clear the Christian mind of error. The Christian faith has been demonstrated again and again to be ridiculous by every argument that the cleverest and wittiest of its opponents could devise, from Celsus down to present-day Members of Parliament. Just think of the vast amount of wit that has been expended upon Christian people in nineteen centuries, from Lucian to Voltaire and onward—and the Christian faith has survived it. Or, again, think of the serious argument that age by age has been based upon the best learning and science of each generation, to convince the Christian that if, as he must grant, philosophy was in possession of sound canons of reason, his faith was hopelessly absurd, or, at least, hopelessly misconceived by himself; not that

it was quite without elements of sense and truth, but that these were entangled in a fabric of myth and nonsense, from which it was urgent that they should be cut away and set free. And again, think of the pressure other than intellectual that has been brought to bear upon the Christian communities from time to time in one land and another—and upon individuals—every kind of persuasion, from the crown of Henri IV. to the *Vivicomburium* which threatened Tertullian. Love and hate have used all the arts of enticement and terror to bring the Christian away from his relations with Christ—and Christ has persistently been too strong for them all. If a faith can be tested by what it has survived, Christianity has been well tested.

But the Christian faith has been tested in another and a rather subtler way. The Church has always been sensitive to philosophic criticism, as we are ourselves to-day. In every generation the sons of Christians have received the best available education of their day—in those studies which, as St. Augustine put it, "they call liberal and we call secular"—they have been steeped in

philosophy, and have turned eyes, enlightened by their training, upon the faith of their fathers. Again, the early Church, and not it alone, has won men of the philosophic temper, for whom it was essential to review their Christian faith and their philosophic principles side by side. Philosophy, however, is one thing, and philosophic systems another. Philosophy is a natural instinct of the human mind, a passion for a co-ordinated view of things, an inherent compulsion to speculation in order to reach truth. But an instinct is a very different thing from the habits or principles of thought to which in a given case it may lead. Yet men have always been apt to identify the instinct with the system of thought. It is essential for a complete man to reflect as to the bearings of his Christian faith upon the whole world of his experience —there must be Christian philosophy. But men personify Philosophy as they do History or Science, and will allege that Philosophy teaches this or that principle. I do not think that this is defensible, for I observe that age by age there has been change in the principles of philosophers. Many of the most far-

reaching postulates or preconceptions of the age of St. Paul have by now long been mere curiosities of the text-books. Yet their sway was once enormous, and an educated man dared not dispute them if he valued his reputation for thought and culture.

In every age the Church has shown a tendency to express the Christian faith in the philosophic terms of that age—a tendency laudable but dangerous; for the proper desire to be intelligible, the natural instinct for making a unity of one's thought, have declined into compromise. Over and over again Christians have been carried by a desire for re-statement and accommodation to a point at which it became evident to quieter people that they had left the historic reality or the eternal significance—or both—of Christ Himself far behind. In the early second century, in deference to a philosophic dogma that God and a Godlike man were immune from pain, a school arose who taught that the death of Jesus on the Cross was not real—a phantom was crucified, or, at best, a man's body—not Christ. Such a compromise, it was quickly seen, emptied the Christian faith of all reality

and all value; it palpably gave away the whole essence of the faith. Who could turn for real help to a Christ impassive of pain—or die for a Christ who vanished at the sight of the Cross? Again, the whole Arian controversy arose from the desire to accommodate the Incarnation to that method of conceiving God which underlies Neo-Platonism, and has been called the "deification of the word *Not*." Once again the compromise was one that gave everything away.

One thing has always stood out clearly sooner or later. Whenever the Church at large, or any Church in particular, has committed itself to any scheme of thought that has lessened the significance of Jesus Christ, it has declined. Error always tells; and the error of over-estimating Jesus Christ ought to have told by now, but the experience of the Church so far suggests that it has no real reason to dread any danger from over-estimating Him, but rather that the danger has always come from obscuring or abating His significance. It is, I think, worth while to reflect upon what this involves. The faith has been tested in every compromise that

Christians have attempted, and if it is still held, it is with some warrant.

A Christian philosophy there must be, but it will not be reached by abandoning the one fixed point we have attained. In the meantime the Christian has had sometimes to stand like St. Sebastian in the pictures —stripped of every rag of philosophic and intellectual dignity, and exposed to the shafts of every so-called philosopher who cared to shoot —and quite glad so to stand, conscious that he had something for which it was worth while to be stripped and shot at, and to go through every kind of shame.

For, in the last place, the Church, with Aristotle, sets the fact before the explanation. The thing is not irrational, if it is true, even if we cannot explain it yet.

So far we have tried to consider some of the grounds on which the Christian community claims to be entitled to hold certain views of its own. These are some of the factors which have worked for verification—forces that have acted together to keep the Church heading for truth all the time.

We come now to some of the main

convictions which have been tested in this way.

First of all, we may set here the serious view that the Christian Church has always taken of moral evil. There are those who minimise evil, who see in it "good in the making," and play with the idea that all the evil that men do is, in a certain sense, the outcome of some divinely-given instinct within them. This is rather confused thinking. The instinct and the use made of it are not the same thing. It is nearer the fact to say, with Principal Henderson, that "the horrible thing about sin is that it is using God against God" —turning the gift in which He has given Himself against the giver, the gift which is equally susceptible of another use. "It was," as Milton says, "from out the rind of one apple tasted that the knowledge of good and evil, as two twins cleaving together, leap'd forth, into the World. And perhaps this is that doom which *Adam* fell into of knowing good and evil, that is to say, of knowing good by evil." But on the previous page he says: "the Knowledge cannot defile . . . if the Will and Conscience be not defil'd." The critic

must look more closely into his psychology. The Church, face to face with the ugly facts of human life, such as depraved instincts and conduct openly and flagrantly anti-social, has advanced sound thinking by calling some things categorically evil. Whatever the origin of evil—and Christian thinkers have turned that over pretty often—the Church knows by now what evil is like and what its effects are, and has set itself to combat evil—and it is hard to imagine a better way to the discovery of what it really is.

I take two forms of evil to illustrate the point. What does cruelty mean? It is a subtle thing. Human nature, as those who have read it best have seen most clearly, is capable of more cruelty than we like to think. Shylock and Lady Macbeth, as Shakespeare saw, are not far from any one of us. But, above all, we must weigh the Christian recognition of the weakness of the human will. Socrates held that, if a man really knew what was good, he would do it; a view that may be defended on the ground of some ambiguity in the word *know*, but otherwise past defence. The Stoics, the noblest teachers of mankind

apart from Christ, staked all on the human will, and lost. What chance in most of us has the will against the imagination? "It is so easy to make up one's mind," the girl says in Mr. Barrie's book; and the answer her playmate gives is a true one: "It's easy to you that has just one mind." St. Augustine* and St. Paul knew how intricately the mind can be divided against itself—knew it in virtue of struggles made by resolve, by self-discipline, by self-government, to bring the mind into unity with itself under a law of righteousness. Men of this type, who have done all to subdue themselves to right, for whom the standards and ideals of thought and conduct are progressively higher—these are the people who recognise most clearly and most sadly how hopeless it is to try to do anything with their own wills and characters. Flabbiness and stubbornness seem incompatible vices, and the human heart

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* *Confessions*, viii., 9, 21. *Imperat animus, ut velit animus, nec alter est nec facit tamen . . . sed non ex toto vult, non ergo ex toto imperat . . . non igitur monstrum partim velle, partim nolle, sed aegritudo animi est . . . et ideo sunt duae voluntates quia una earum tota non est. . . .*

knows them for twins. It is worth noting as we pass that in the experience of both St. Paul and St. Augustine the recognition of evil was the first step to the solution of their intellectual problems. The moral problem, they found, came first; and when they set to work in earnest at that, and were willing to avail themselves of the best means to solve it, they found themselves nearer to a real understanding of God and His nature.

In the second place, we may consider the Christian conviction as to the inexorable character of law.* There the Stoic was before the Christian, so that it is not exactly novel when Mr. Bernard Shaw tells us that there is no forgiveness. Certain sections of the Church may have provoked him, for there is a type of Christian teaching which suggests that God is, after all, the arch-sentimentalist of the universe, Who will let His laws work off and on, like electric light in its early days, and is willing to be the consenting victim of certain conspicuous dodges. That teaching is not in the New Testament, and it is as

* This point will recur in the fifth lecture.

well for us to recognise as soon as possible the hard element in the Gospel.*

The Church, like its Master, has based itself on fact and lived among facts, and it is by now fairly well possessed of some truths; and the eternal connection of action and consequence is one of them. The popular mind finds this in the New Testament in the visions of Judgment and the Great White Throne; but behind these lay a profound experience of life. In a series of vivid metaphors the actual, obvious, and present effects of sin are sketched by St. Paul and others. Men become alienated from the life of God; God gives them up to a reprobate mind—a mind that cannot discharge its proper functions, a conscience cauterised or darkened—untrue, that is, in its estimates of life, unreliable; a conscience stained. Here there is a parallel in

* Paul Wernle, *The Beginning of Christianity* (tr.), vol. i. p. 286: "For clear-thinking, ethical natures, such as those of Jesus and St. Paul, it is a downright necessity to separate heaven and hell as distinctly as possible. It is only ethically worthless speculations that have always tried to minimise this distinction. Carlyle is an instance in our own times of how men, even to-day, once more enthusiastically welcome the conception of hell as soon as the distinction between good and bad becomes all-important to them."

the teaching of Marcus Aurelius—"Of whatever colour are the thoughts you think often, to that colour does your mind grow; for the soul is dyed by its thoughts."* The idea is of a conscience through which, as through coloured glass, a man sees all life the colour of his sin. The law is inexorable here; and the Church knows it better than some of its critics.

In the third place, we may set the high value which the Christian community has always placed on the soul. Plato said much in this direction, and the Church says more. No school of thought has ever treated the soul so seriously. Bear in mind the utmost that the Church has had to say about Christ—waiving for the moment any discussion of the rightness or wrongness of that—and then realise that it has taught that this Christ, of Whom it has believed the most incredible things, died for the meanest of mean and vile men. The Stoic had to let some men go. But whether we accept or reject the Christian teaching as to the soul, it is clear

* Marcus Aurelius, V., 16.

that higher value is not to be set on the soul, its grandeur, its worth, and its dignity than the Church set on it — *pro quo Christus mortuus est*—and this without slurring in any way the evil it saw in the soul.

The Christian Church has always recognised the infinite element in the soul of man. This is partly expressed in the doctrine of its immortality. The soul is built for immortality and for God; it reaches into infinity, in the conviction that it must have God in all His fulness—the heart crying out for the living God, crying out against its own evil, dissatisfied till it has God, and rests in Him. *Tu nos fecisti ad te et inquietum est cor nostrum donec requiescat in te.** And here again the Church rests on experience.

On one of the great trunk roads of India a missionary saw a woman measuring herself in prostrations along the ground—a familiar form of pilgrimage. Through dust and dirt and heat she moved onward, lying down, marking the farthest point her hand could reach, and rising and starting again from that

* Augustine, *Confessions*, i., 1.

point to prostrate herself and reach forward again. She must have made seven or eight hundred prostrations to cover a mile. He asked where she was going, and she named a shrine in the Himalayas, where from some cleft in a valley a burst of natural gas would from time to time leap and take fire in the air and vanish—a fleeting manifestation of God. It meant for her a journey of a thousand miles. Why was she going? "*Uski darshan*," she said—two words and no more: "Vision of him."*

"Vision of Him!" The Church knows that that is the cry of the human heart, and it knows, too, what that cry involves at last—the acceptance of God on His own terms of love and righteousness. That sense for God can be deadened in a man, if he is shallow enough; but for anyone for whom life is real, shallow views are impossible, as men find out in the misery of life without God. The intellect, working in the abstract, may persuade itself that there is no God—none that can be reached; and you have the strange tearing of the nature in two, the heart crying

* This story was told me by Mr. C. F. Andrews, of Delhi.

out, and the intellect arguing it down, and pretending not to hear. The heart is right; for peace is never reached till the intellect accepts what the heart has known all along. Instinct and intuition may take us very far astray—so, too, may intellect. It is interesting in this connection to remark how, as men grow older, and grow into the meaning of human relations, and the deepest feelings bound up with them, they turn away, like the poet Virgil, from even the most splendid rationalism.

Lastly, for the present—for we must return to this in the lectures that follow—we may remind ourselves that while others have recognised the reality of evil and the inexorable character of law, the grandeur of the human soul (to some extent) and its cry for God, for the Church all these things point to Jesus Christ. The central conviction—the crowning offence and error of the Church in the eyes of all its critics from the beginning till now—is the belief that "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself"—that Jesus Christ is the same, yesterday, and to-day, and forever.

To conclude, I come to the conduct and method of the Church in view of its convictions.

First of all, then, the Christian Church is the one body in all the world incapable of despair. The Stoic did despair: "When a man is hardened to stone, how shall we be able to deal with him by argument?" There is not, after all, very much to be done with some people by argument—on that we can agree. But the Christian Church, conscious of its own story—the company of Christian men, each conscious of a new life in One "Who loved me and gave Himself for me"—knows quite well what to do. The envoy of Christ, remembering Who sent him, never hesitates. He will not compromise, nor blink facts, nor abate (like the Unjust Steward) the figure upon the bill; he will ask the highest from the man dead as stone, for anything less would be an abatement of the man's worth. He will not play with cheap systems of salvation, as men did in the Græco-Roman world in the early days of the Church, and do still; but he will go with a simple and clear-cut message, the outcome of his own

experience—no mechanism, no dodge, beneath the dignity of the soul, but an offer of forgiveness and power and new life in Christ.

The religious systems of the world may be grouped under three classes—not quite exclusively, for some of them overlap two of the classes, or even all three. There are the religions of magic, found all over the heathen world, and not there alone, perhaps—schemes of initiation, incantation, mystery, and, as the Greek put it, "things done"—δρώμενα and ὄργια—for which in the early centuries of our era a great apology was made in the name of Philosophy by Plutarch and Apuleius and the Neo-Platonists. To this we shall have to return in another lecture. But a great step forward had long before been made by Plato himself, when, in his *Republic*, he made a clean sweep of quacks and prophets and "sacrifices and jollifications,"* and preached the religion of Morals. In the *Gorgias* he proclaims that there is no fear in the next world for the man who spends his life "with his eye upon truth" (τὴν ἀλήθειαν σκοπῶν)—"for you will suffer

* *Republic*, ii., 364 A—365 A.

nothing terrible, if you will really be honourable and good, and practise virtue."* That is a great religion, if it is followed in a great and profound way, because, if a man take it seriously, it will bring him into touch with realities. But there he will learn its limitations, for he will find, with St. Paul, how desperately impossible are its conditions. If he does not reach this point, there is a worse peril, for, as our Lord taught about the Pharisees, he will be liable to lose all sense of reality altogether, and the religion will decline into the pursuit of merit—and "the damnation of hell," as Jesus said. Yet this old religion finds its advocates still, pleading for self-culture and self-discipline—which is a higher thing than self-culture—and the service of men, too, (like the Stoics), even on the basis of an unsatisfied heart.

But the Christian religion is quite other—it is the religion of Grace, the only one. Its faith is in the willingness of God to give all that man needs—in Christ, salvation from sin, new and newer ideals of righteousness, a re-

* *Gorgias*, 527 D.

emancipated will, inward peace, and perpetual joy. "Give what Thou biddest," prayed St. Augustine, "and bid what Thou wilt."* Whatever men may have to say about it, to this the Church is committed. How impossible the tasks are which lie before it, the Christian community, after long experience, knows better than anyone; and, as a result of that long experience, there stands the faith that God gives all and does all in Christ.

And here is our last point on this head. Just as, when we dealt with the convictions that make up the Christian faith, we found all summed up in the sufficiency of Jesus Christ, so here again, in the sphere of action, we find Luther's words stand for the experience of every Christian—*Nos nihil sumus; Christus solus est omnia.* In the centre of all, in life and work, the Church sets the unexplored Jesus Christ, that historical person who was nailed to the Cross, and who still, in the faith of the Church, lives and works and does all. We cannot tell you all we want to know about Him; the Church

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* *Confessions*, x., 29, 40, *da quod iubes et iube quod vis.*

looks to eternity for some of that; there are many things we cannot explain; but by experience in life and work and faith, we have found that all turns upon Him.

My last word for to-day is this. If we can learn anything from history, if it has anything certain to tell us, it is that, if any group of beliefs, any body of doctrine, any faith, has ever justified itself in human experience, it is the Christian faith; or, if that seem too sweeping a statement (I do not think it is), let us say this—that the results of the Church's belief, and of its action upon those beliefs, are such as to claim the very closest attention from people who are in earnest with life. These results are not to be lightly treated, but with a full sense of the difficulties to be overcome before they can be achieved, and of their significance in the life of the man who knows them. What, then, does the re-emancipation of the will mean—with its escape from the clutch of habit, its triumph over the disastrous effects of the stained conscience, and the hopelessness and paralysis of sin? Again, what is the significance of the joy that has from the beginning filled the Christian life, overflowing all

the obstacles, real enough, that militate against peace? What is to be said of Christian joy as an index to the ultimate truth of things?* And, lastly, what are we to say of the power that goes with the Christian life? Criticism from without and self-criticism from within, the consciousness of failure at every turn, as the splendid ideals of Jesus Christ shine more and more into the soul—notwithstanding all, the Christian Church has been effective; it has been doing through nineteen centuries what Jesus Christ pledged Himself that it should do. I ask you, as students of human nature and of history, Do you realise at all in its fulness what that means? It is worth study.

* To this we shall have to return in the fifth lecture.

LECTURE IV

The Experience of the Early Church

TO-DAY we have to consider the experience of the early Church—to recapture, if we can, something of the impulse and the happiness that made it the joyous and powerful thing it was. But let us first try to sum up the results we have so far reached.

We have seen that our business in dealing with the Christian tradition is verification—to get back to the facts and to know them in their fulness, to win from them all their value and significance.

In the second place, we have seen that we must give a closer attention to experience as embodied in the tradition of the Christian community, and lay more stress upon the probability of real truth being embodied in some way in the main doctrines of the Church. We may not accept, word for word, exactly, what the Church has said as the final ex-

pression of truth, but we shall feel in it and through it—operative somehow in spite of errors of statement—some element of truth that is real and vital.

Thirdly, we looked at the Church itself, and recognised how it had been tested by the criticism of the world, by self-criticism, by the desire to compromise, and had so far established its right to be heard as at least a serious witness—a witness, that is, who, however confused in utterance, had truth to tell, and was trying in all earnestness to tell it.

To-day we have to try, through the words and literature of the early Church, to reach what lies behind. The phrase of that day is not ours, nor are the preconceptions; we approach everything in a different way; but we have to remember that none the less we are dealing with human material, with a real experience, and we must cultivate the imagination to penetrate an unfamiliar dialect if we are to make anything at all of history.

There is a considerable body of early Christian literature, and perhaps no other literature has ever had so strange a fate. One part of it is familiar to every race of mankind, civilised

or uncivilised, beyond any books the world has seen; and the rest of it in the Apostolic Fathers, the *Odes of Solomon*, and the Apologists of the second century, is left to specialists and ignored in general even by classical scholars who study the Roman Empire. Yet it cannot be denied that the instinct, or whatever it was, that made the New Testament canon, was generally right both in choice and in rejection. If we are really aiming at the fact and truth of Christian experience, this literature must be studied with the same earnest enthusiasm as any other.

Mr. H. G. Wood has made a very telling criticism upon one exponent of early Church history, who has of late years taken pains to be heard. "He has no theory of any early Christian document; he does not explain how it came to be written, by whom, or under what impulse, or for what purpose. He never explains a Pauline epistle as a document."

That is a most damaging criticism. What sort of history can be written from unexamined sources? What is history without what the Germans call *Quellenkritik* — criticism of sources? Has a historian, of all

people, any right to use a book as an illiterate person would? A book is—a book. But *what* is a book? That is a question worth thinking about; and classical study in this country has declined for want of such reflection. How does a book come into being? What is its genesis? There is a fine passage in Emerson's poem, *The Problem*, which answers these questions:

> Out from the heart of nature rolled
> The burdens of the Bible old;
> The litanies of nations came,
> Like the volcano's tongue of flame,
> Up from the burning core below,—
> The canticles of love and woe.

Or, again, there are Carlyle's words, as he gave the finished MS. of *The French Revolution* to his wife:* "I know not whether this book is worth anything, nor what the world will do with it, or misdo, or entirely forbear to do, as is likeliest; but this I could tell the world: You have not had for a hundred years any book that comes more direct and flamingly from the heart of a living man." And again there are Goethe's lines:

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* *Carlyle's Life in London*, i., p. 89.

Denn es muss von Herzen gehen
Was auf Herzen wirken soll.

Literature is no mechanical product; it is, when it is any good at all, the offspring of passion—"simple, sensuous, and passionate," are Milton's words to describe what a poem should be; and prose is of the same family. When a book reaches the heart of—we will not say a generation, for very often one generation is not the best judge—but of several generations, and holds a place in the thought and feeling of man for centuries together, you must look well to it if you think it did not come from a great human heart, but was the mechanical product of ingenuity or artifice. The ancient critic, Longinus, is right, here as often, when he says that "sublimity is the echo of a great soul."*

The German scholar Norden, in his book entitled *Kunstprosa*, comes in due course to the writings of Paul of Tarsus. "I find Paul hard to understand," he says very honestly, but he finds something in him that he recognises. "So the language of the heart

* Longinus 9, 2, ὕψος μεγαλοφροσύνης ἀπήχημα.

was born again," says this critic; "since the hymn of Cleanthes, nothing had been written in the Greek language so full of feeling and at the same time so splendid (*nichts so Inniges und zugleich so Grandioses*) as the hymn of Paul on love." Later on in his work he recurs to this: "Both these hymns on love to God and love to men (Romans 8, 31; 1 Cor. 13) have given back to the Greek language, what had been lost for centuries—the feeling (*Innigkeit*) and the enthusiasm of the Epopt (the initiated) quickened by his union with God. . . . How this speech of the heart must have struck home into the souls of men accustomed to listen to the silly verbosity of the sophists! In these passages the diction of the Apostle rises to the height of Plato's in the *Phaedrus*."*

One thing at least is clear to those who even in a slight degree share Norden's knowledge of the period—that Paul thought infinitely less about style than did the sophists, who thought of nothing else, and at the same time he achieved what they never reached. How did

* Norden, *Kunstprosa* II., pp. 499, 459, 509.

he manage it? The first thing in style is, as Longinus put it, a great soul, and then real thoughts and deep feeling. If a man will be true to the depths of him, he will speak well. Conversely, when we find life and sunshine in the words of a poet or a religious teacher—when his style is strong and pure with the simplicity and power of great music—when it takes us back into the very sanctuary of a man's spirit, we shall expect to find there things of eternal significance; and truth will be one of them.

The rest of this lecture will be given to the attempt to get behind the ink and paper of the books of the early Church, to ask not only what the writers say, but what they mean and what they are, and how they came to mean what they did mean, and to be what they were. "Get first," wrote Carlyle, "into the sphere of thought by which it is so much as possible to judge of Luther, or of any man like Luther, otherwise than distractedly; we may then begin arguing with you."

First, then, let us study St. Paul for a little.

Autobiography is not the most cheerful of words—so many books with this label have

had neither *Autos* nor *Bios* in them; the authors so often have not lived very much nor been very much. But every real book is in some sense autobiography. Dull as books and lectures may be, they are apt to be duller when they lack some autobiographic element, tacit or explicit. However artfully the writer of either may cloak the personal element, *Et quorum pars magna fui* is in every story.

Carlyle indicated as much when he wrote, as we saw in a former lecture, of Novalis and his books.* Paul, it might be said, never wrote an autobiography, and yet never wrote anything else. Imagine a formal autobiography by Paul: "I was born at Tarsus, a city of Cilicia, a citizen of no mean city,"—and what early influences played upon him, and how he went to Jerusalem, and his first impressions of it, and how he sat at the feet of Gamaliel, till Gamaliel gave such an uncertain note about the Christian movement that the pupil saw it was time to take action of his own—and so on. No, if he had done it,

* See p. 59.

there would have been all the usual trouble about such works—the delimitation of the provinces of *Dichtung* and *Wahrheit;* and, besides, a formal work of such a kind by Paul would have been essentially false and non-Pauline—how could the real Paul ever have spared the time, even in prison, for such introspection? Erasmus called Paul's style "pure flame," and there could hardly be an autobiography that came half so flaming from the heart of a man as that which Paul did not write at all, but which escaped him when he was dealing with other matters.

"O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death? . . . There is therefore now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus; for the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set me free from the law of sin and death." A passage like that is inexhaustibly full of the man—how are we to judge it, till we tingle with the man's own passion for righteousness, with his shame of failure, and the unspeakable joy he knows in the given life in Jesus Christ? There is the story of his life in the phrase at the head of several epistles, "the

slave of Jesus Christ"—in the clause, "Who loved me and gave Himself for me"—in the simple utterance, "The Lord stood by me and put strength into me"—in the afterthought added, almost without intending it, to the Galatian letter when it was finished: "God forbid that I should glory save in the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified to me, and I to the world."* Celsus, in his *True Word*, the first great literary attack on the Church,† says that every Christian, of whatever sect, quotes that sentence. There may be many things in Paul which, like Norden, we do not understand, or to which, with Luther, we may say: "Brother Paul, this argument does not stick," but our business is not with the word nor the argument, but with the man. Can we explain

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* An interesting and sympathetic account of Paul, as the real interpreter of Jesus, is given by the Jewish scholar, Moriz Friedländer, in the last chapter of his *Religiöse Bewegungen innerhalb des Judentums im Zeitalter Jesu*. One of his phrases must serve here: "Paulus, der geschworene Feind jeder Halbheit" is an excellent characterisation.

† Written about 178 A.D.

him, if we have never troubled to share or to know his experience?

Take another New Testament writer—the anonymous author of the Epistle to the Hebrews, "the most cultured Greek of them all," as his critics from Origen* to Norden and Dr. J. H. Moulton agree, with his "masterly handling" of "all the delicate shades of meaning" of which the Greek literary language of his time was capable—a man who has given to the whole Christian Church some of its most moving language in relation to Jesus Christ. There are, indeed, some who find little in this epistle but old and obsolete metaphor, awkward enough by now—priest and altar, sacrifice and temple—to say nothing of Melchizedek, and a touch of rhetoric which some critics say they feel in it. But when one tries to get an effective grip of the man and his problem, his book or epistle comes home in a new way. This is what he had to wrestle through—how can a man have a real religion, capable of managing a genuine reconciliation of the universe and experience, capable of

* Quoted by Eusebius, *Eccl. Hist.* vi., 25.

keeping him from temptation and carrying him through martyrdom, if he cut himself adrift from every means of grace of which Jew or pagan had ever conceived, priest, sacrifice, victim, blood, and the camp of Israel? When a man has fought his way to peace through perplexities like these—perplexities which we can never understand till in some measure we share them—we may well be interested in his conclusion; it will have the marks of battle on it. When such a man speaks to us, let us watch his style—his words and their order; he gives us a sentence, full and complete, and then with a sudden leap of feeling comes an after-thought, that tells us as much again. "Jesus Christ yesterday and to-day the same—and for ever," he adds. Before we criticise him, let us understand him.

The Fourth Gospel is in many ways one of the most perplexing books in Christian literature. If we study it on a level with the other three, in order to an objective history of Jesus, we are involved in the greatest difficulties. For it is not so much a history of Jesus as men knew Him in Galilee, as a record of what Jesus had been, and had become,

to a man in the course of a long life. Our problem here is to explore the experience and the impulse from which the man writes. How does a man come to write such sentences as: "Behold the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world." Such a statement is either rhetoric or autobiography. What is the life so written? Have we touched it? Or again: "God so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on Him should not perish, but have everlasting life"—the words are too familiar, and have been quoted too often, we feel,

Upon the topmost froth of thought;

but they were not so written. What has taken the writer so triumphantly outside all national barriers, Jew as he seems to have been? What has given him his conception of the love of God taking shape in a story so shocking to Jew and Gentile alike—contact with the world, with pain, with the damned? Or, again, what does he mean by "everlasting life"? What content beyond mere duration has the word for him? What had he in mind in the way of past experience when he wrote of the promise of the Paraclete? If science bids

us study the "life history" of plant and animal, and make biology and not morphology our aim, what of ideas? Too often we study them in the herbarium, as it were, or the dissecting-room, and forget the soil and the sky that made them and the life that was in them. Is there an author who has suffered more from this intellectual slackness on the part of his readers than the writer of the Fourth Gospel?

I turn now to the Apocalypse, and, as here we reach more ordinary people, I propose to linger rather longer over a crucial and most informing passage. In doxology we come nearer to fact than in dogma, for it is out of doxology that historically dogma has grown. The primitive Christian first went through an experience; then he broke out in thanksgiving and doxology for it; and finally he, and other people, began to speculate on the relation of the experience so stated to the general sum of human experience and knowledge; and the result of this speculation was called, in the language of the day, dogma. For our present purpose we have to concentrate attention on the experience as the

primary thing. The doxology then will bring us nearer to this than the dogma.

The writer of the Apocalypse, whoever he was, remains one of the most interesting figures of the New Testament. He wrote at a time when the Christian movement was recognised for what it was by the Roman Government and was treated accordingly; the sect was in a fair way to be stamped out in blood. Yet his book is full of scenes and songs of triumph—"I heard the voice of harpers harping with their harps: and they sung as it were a new song."* He represents a miserable handful of slaves and abjects; he counts them by "thousands of thousands," and sees them glorified—"these are they that came out of the great tribulation."† Behind such vision lies experience. Like all prophets, spiritual, political, or commercial, he reads the future out of the present, and, from his picture

*As Wernle suggests, when one realises the clear call the writer gives, and his note of triumph in Jesus, there is little wonder that the martyrs "for the testimony of Jesus" valued the book; and perhaps they did not like it less for its borrowed imagery—that too had associations.

†The omission of the definite article in the Authorised Version obscures the situation.

of the future, with care we can reconstruct his experience in the present. And, in case we cannot, he sums it up several times in his doxologies.

The first of these will serve as a starting-point. Like a Hebrew psalmist, he sets at the beginning the keynote of the music he has beaten out. "To Him that loved us and washed us from our sins in His blood, and made us kings and priests to God and His Father, to Him be the glory and the power for ever; Amen."

It has long been observed that the Apocalypse depends more directly on books than any other New Testament document, and sometimes in a rather curious way. Here the writer borrows a phrase from Exodus (xix. 6): "Ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests and an holy nation." He knew well enough that this ideal for Israel had not been reached; Israel had set up a single man as king and a separate tribe as priests, and had abandoned the greater conception of a nation in which every man was king and priest. The race had abdicated. The Christian writers claim the promise as their own—it was

certainly derelict. They maintain that the followers of Jesus are in effect kings and priests, set free from sin and standing in a personal relation to God. The term employed for "king" served also for the Roman Emperor. But "king" and "priest" had in antiquity a peculiar identity of suggestion. King and priest, each belonged to some guardian god, and shared his divine nature, while each stood among men as a man set apart and sacred—each was *tabu* in short—the god's own, and guarded from common touch by a divine sanctity—and each again had the mystical function of standing between god and man, of mediating and bringing them into effective relations. So much for the new names given to the Christian by our writer.

It is worth while to see to whom these names are given. It was commonly remarked for centuries that the Christians came from the lowest classes. They were of the common people—"the most unlettered sort," as the educated observed, and the hopelessly depraved, as more decent critics noticed with a shudder. "Other cults call for those who are

holy, who are pure from all stain, and clean of hands," said Celsus; but the Christian constituency consisted of "sinners," precisely as they said: "You mean the unjust, the thief, the burglar, the prisoner, the robber of temple and tomb; whom else would a brigand invite to join him?"* None of this criticism was too strong. Roman slavery produced a class of person unknown to us. "Far-seeing Zeus," said Homer, long before, "takes away half a man's worth, when he brings the day of slavery upon him."† Often in Roman days slavery took the whole away—everything that made the man's *aretê*, the essential group of qualities and faculties that in combination make him human. With the woman it was perhaps worse. The "hired animalism" of Tennyson's poem stood higher, for she had a wage for her shame, and the slave-woman had not. The female animal almost stood higher, for while the slave had the same sex she had not the beast's privilege of bearing young. Man and woman, the slaves acknowledged and accepted their degradation

* Quoted by Origen, *Contra Celsum*, iii., 59.

† *Odyssey*, xvii., 322.

—and the lowest stage is reached when that is done. Living on the basis of their own worthlessness, what wonder if they justified the free man's contempt for the slave? No one had hope or help for them. "I thank Thee," prayed the Jew, "that I am a Jew and not a Gentile, a man and not a woman, a freeman and not a slave." The Stoic had a gospel of self-help for men and women who retained their will-power. There were, indeed, slaves, as there were free men, equal to this stern gospel—there was Epictetus, at least—but such men were very few. This was one of the things that wrecked the Roman Empire—the class acknowledged by themselves, as by others, to be below redemption.

The first thing to be done was to bring these hopeless people to another opinion about themselves. The Christian went to the slave and told him that the Son of God loved him, and had died for him—a ransom.* To a mind philosophically trained the phrase was in those

* *Cf.* Matthew xx., 28. The many phrases and analogies connected with "ransom" and "redemption" gain new meaning for us when we think what a note they sounded for the slave.

days as silly as it was repulsive. But the Christian believed it, and in no ordinary way —he believed it with such effect that the slave came to believe it too, and became a man again. It was one of the features of the days of persecution that slaves, men, women, and girls, had found a new stamina, a new dignity. They would face fire and torture and beast without fear or flinching. In common life they began to shed the servile vices; they became honest and pure; they "received the Holy Spirit," as Christians put it, and showed an extraordinary gift for winning men by sheer force and beauty of character. The doxology in the Apocalypse answers word for word to the facts. To find the ultimate philosophic expression and account of what happened, and of what made it happen, is a secondary matter; the first thing is to realise the fact in its wonder.

In the third century, a short but very remarkable little book was written, by whom we do not know. Later on it was appended to a tedious production known as the *Gospel of Nicodemus*, and there it is still to be read, perhaps intact, wonderful in its contrast with

its setting.* It is the oldest story of the Harrowing of Hell. It tells how Christ, as it is said in the Creed, "descended into hell," and set free its captives, and ascended with them. One of these captives tells it in the first person. It has the naïve sincerity of a true poet, and the large and honest imagination. The story begins in hell, and we overhear Satan and Hades talking with some anxiety as to what may follow yet from the Crucifixion of Jesus; for now "into the darkness there dawned as it were the light of the sun, and it shone, and we saw one another." This sudden gleam of light, and especially the imaginative use of it by the writer in the last sentence, bring out for us the age-long darkness of the grave with strange feeling. A great voice like thunder is heard calling on the everlasting gates to open that the King of Glory may come in. Hades bids make fast the gates of brass and defend them; but the forefathers who had been with him from the beginning mock him. Again the voice

* I think the English reader will find it most accessible in Hone's *Apocryphal New Testament.*

sounds, and Hades asks: "Who is this King of Glory?" The answer comes: "A Lord strong and mighty, a Lord mighty in war," and at the word the gate of brass and its bars of iron are shattered, the dead are loosed from their bonds, "and we with them," as Jesus of Nazareth enters. The King of Glory stretches forth his right hand and raises up Adam, and "blesses him on the brow with the sign of the cross"; and then, with patriarchs, prophets, and martyrs, He "leaps forth" from Hades. Still holding Adam by the hand, He brings them all to Paradise, where Enoch and Elijah meet them, and then a more interesting figure. To him the fathers said: "Who art thou that hast the look of a robber, and what is the cross thou bearest on thy shoulders?" And the penitent thief tells them his story, and how, when he came to the gate of Eden, "when the fiery sword saw the sign of the cross, it opened to me and I came in." And then the story ends, simply enough: "All this we two brothers saw and heard."

To choose a sentence or two from such a piece is to do it some injustice, but a

sympathetic reader will feel that here we have a great piece of imaginative literature, and he will ask himself from what impulse it came.* Surely some new and first-hand experience of the real and eternal lies behind every such creation, and we have again to be sure, before we criticise, that we understand whence came the impulse that stirred the poet to such power and beauty. It is no idle enquiry, for experience of our own is involved in it.

We have now to go a step further and touch upon some of the experiences and convictions that underlie all early Christian literature, and I begin with the new life.

St. Paul writes to his friends and converts with great frankness about the old life and the new; he is as explicit as Celsus himself. In his letter to the Corinthian church (1 Cor. vi. 11) he runs over a series of horrible and mean vices, and then says quite bluntly: "And such were some of you; but ye are

* That it went to the heart of the Church is shown by the frequency with which it was treated in poetry; *e.g.*, by Prudentius, Synesius, and Ephrem the Syrian. The hymn of Synesius upon it is translated by Mrs. Browning.

washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God." He knew what the streets of a great Hellenistic city and seaport were like—"the great sinful streets of Naples"—and he and his converts knew how bad the old life had been, "alienated from God and without hope in the world." Greek culture, as we know it in literature and art, at its highest and most glorious, was not the fruit of Hellenistic life in the Roman Empire, nor is it representative of it. But let us look rather at the new life.

One of the telling words used in the New Testament to describe the change is "Enlightened." The word to-day has lost its charm and wonder. The great eighteenth-century movement of *Aufklärung*, or Illumination, had once, perhaps, hope in its very name; but that has died away into a very common and dull day. The Christian, I think, took the word from the Mysteries—a symbol-word of gladness. With eyes shut men went into the holy place; there was a priest, the light-bringer; and in trance, perhaps, or in vision a great light shone upon them as they drew

near to their god.* The Christian took the word; for him it was truer than for the Greek and the Egyptian. He had lived in darkness —with the understanding darkened, and he meant now that Christ, Himself the true *Phôtagôgos*,† had shone upon him and brought him near to God; and now he lives and moves in a new hope and joy, a hallowed being. The New Testament word "Saint" touches the same order of ideas; it represents a person set apart for a God—ἅγιος, *sacer*, *tabu*—the God's own, and immune from unhallowed touch. It is good to linger over the phrases, unstudied and spontaneous, in which the Christian writers tell of the new life—"joy unspeakable and full of glory." Familiarity tends to rob us of them, but at a touch of the old experience they are alive again.

In the Epistle of Clement to the Corinthians comes a description of Christian life even in Corinth. "A profound and rich peace was given to all, and an insatiable passion for

* The description depends on a passage at the end of Apuleius' *Golden Ass.*

† *Cf.* Clement of Alexandria, *Protrepticus*, 120, 1.

doing good; an abundant outpouring of the Holy Spirit also fell upon all." Philanthropy, I am afraid, is a dull word, like most long words borrowed from the Greek and the Latin, to describe in more dignified terms the ordinary Christian virtues; and people who value themselves to-day will have nothing to do with "philanthropy" and "doing good." They are almost technical terms, dulled by use by uninspired people, like "oxide" and "the subliminal self." But we must look at words as they come first from the poet-souls who make them, trailing clouds of glory, and making the heart beat and the eye brighten. One of the historian's tasks is to re-create the past by means of worn-down watchwords, as the numismatist will tell you the history of a dynasty and a civilisation from a series of battered coins. They are dull enough now; but back to the beginning! There cannot have been many people with "an insatiable passion for doing good" in any Græco-Roman city; and what a Godsend even a Corinthian Christian must have been with such a passion for the wrecks and waste-products of a commercial and pleasure-loving city that organised

its gains and its pleasures on the basis of slavery! Think of the change in such a man —the new dreams that haunt him of a character like Christ's, the new passion for service of his Master, the new standards! "Which is ampler?" asks Tertullian,* "to say, Thou shalt not kill; or to teach, Be not even angry? Which is more perfect, to forbid adultery or to bid refrain from a single lustful look?" Think of the phrase in 2 Peter (ii. 14) describing a certain type of person "having eyes full of adultery"—and later Greek literature illustrates what numbers of such persons there were in a Greek town. "But ye are washed," says St. Paul.

It is not merely that a change has been effected, and a great one, but that it is to continue; it is to be a progressive development. Paul uses a number of commercial terms when he writes to Corinth, and by means of one of them illustrates his conception of the Holy Spirit. It is the *arrhabôn*,† or

* *Apology*, 45.

† 2 Cor. i. 22; v. 5. The reference to sealing in the first passage has suggestions worth study. The seal was the one way of protecting property in a household of slaves

earnest, that God gives a man as a guarantee that He will fulfil His promises to him. God is going to do for the Christian something (as Paul puts it) "exceeding abundant, above all that we can ask or think," and meanwhile gives him a token or pledge which binds God —and that is the Holy Spirit. So much has been said amiss about the Holy Spirit, and such difficult psychological problems are connected with the whole matter, that statements of this kind are received with hesitation. But Paul is not talking theories, he is speaking from experience; and that experience we have to re-capture before we are entitled to dispute his phrase. In another passage (Gal. v. 22, 23) he speaks of the fruits of the Spirit as "love, joy, peace, long-suffering, kindness, goodness, faith, meekness, and self-mastery," and he adds that they that are Christ's have "crucified the flesh with the passions and the lusts." The line of a second century poet comes back to one's mind as

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(*cf.* Clem. Alex., *Paed.*, iii., 59), and it is a metaphor, I think, already used in the Mysteries (*cf.* Clem. Alex. *Protr.*, 120).

one thinks of this glad new life which Paul describes—

Ver novum, ver jam canorum, ver renatus orbis est.

"New spring, singing spring, spring the world re-born"—that is the story of the Church. Paul's list of fruits is very interesting. The last, self-mastery, was a Stoic virtue; but the rest did not ripen easily in the Hellenistic world, and the rocky soil and Northern slope of the Stoic garden were too hard for them. But most people would have said they were not virtues for men at all—rather for women and slaves, as Nietzsche and his followers would say to-day. Yet how much would be lost to life if these fruits of the Spirit were taken away or ripened no more!

It is to be noted that, in so summing up the fruits of the Spirit, Paul holds the same outlook as Jesus. It was He who brought these virtues into their new place and significance, and it is to be remembered that He is the centre of all this Christian movement. Men in the second century were reading the four Gospels day by day as a part of Christian life and practice;* their life

* Justin, *Apology*, i., 66, 67; Clem. Alex., *Strom.*, vii., 49.

and their thought are Christocentric. Men may theorise as they please about the necessity of a historical base or a historical element in religion; so far as we have got, experience shows how much it does signify. It has been said that in every age the condition of religious progress is the return to the historical Jesus. In every age we are apt to re-conceive Him in the terms of our own day and our own thought; but the next generation has other thoughts and other ideals, and revolts against those of its parents. So long as the Church turns to the historical Jesus—the real Jesus of history—it can face these changes. But a Jesus with the date-mark of a particular school of interpreters—an eighteenth-century Jesus or a mid-Victorian Jesus—is not to be thought of for a moment. The Gospel message is "Come unto Me," and the function of the Church is to bring men to Christ and to leave them with Him to learn of Him for themselves.

We may notice in the next place, among the experiences of the early Church, that it has triumphed over nationalist barriers. "Thou wast slain," run the words of the New

Song, "and hast redeemed us to God by Thy blood out of every kindred and tongue and people and nation." Paul urges the same thing in the Epistle to the Colossians when he emphasises that it is Jesus Who has "made peace"—He is the great reconciler. It may be the case that, as some critics say, Jesus never spoke the words at the end of the First Gospel, "Go ye into all the world"; but, as Ignatius says: "He that truly has the word of Jesus can hear His silence also,"* and the Christians had heard it and had gone into all the world before Matthew wrote. A contemporary Greek writer remarks of the philosophers that "some of them do not go to the people, despairing, perhaps, of their ability to make the many better."† Socrates

* Ignatius, *ad Eph.* 15. It is worth remembering that Ignatius was already on his way to martyrdom when he wrote —early in the second century.

† Dio Chrysostom, *Or.*, xxxii., 9 (to the Alexandrines): Some, *ἀπεγνωκότες ἴσως τὸ βελτίους ἂν ποιῆσαι τοὺς πολλούς;* some, like the Cynics, degrade philosophy; and it is rare to get a man ready to face ridicule from goodwill and care for others. Even if Dio is gently suggesting his own virtues here, it is fair to say that he did frankly preach morality to his audiences. On the unfriendly attitude of Pharisaism to the conversion of Gentiles to Judaism, see

used to say that he was a "citizen of the world," and the philosophic schools were recruited from all races. Greek culture and Roman rule were tending to weld the races—"preparing the way for Christ," as the poet Prudentius wrote about 409 A.D. But the union of men in the Church was a deeper one, for in the Church there was a place for the slave, as we have seen, but he left the name of shame outside. It is said that the word "slave" is not found among the inscriptions of the Catacombs. It was the Christian doctrine that master and slave were redeemed in the same way by the same Saviour; and it is a historical and still visible fact that if you begin to care for the crucified Jesus, everybody else who cares for Him stands in a new relation to you. There is no bond like it. Master and slave met at the Eucharist in the early Church, to commemorate the dying of their common Master, Who "took upon Him the form of a slave," and

Moriz Friedländer, *Die Religiösen Bewegungen des Judentums im Zeitalter Jesu*, p. 31. Contrast St. Paul—a friend of mine has pointed out that Paul's emotion is very liable to break up his grammar, when he thinks of his mission to the Gentiles or of Jesus Christ.

died a slave's death; and a new force bound them together in a new spirit. And when it came to martyrdom, a story like that of Felicitas and Perpetua shows how distinctions of lady and slave fell away in shame and suffering shared for the One name. There have been many reformations of Hinduism, but none strong enough to prevail in the long run over caste. The love of Jesus did this for the Church from the beginning, and does it for India to-day. The ultimate God of the Græco-Roman world was the abstraction summed up, as we have seen, as "the deification of the word *Not*"—beyond and above being itself, and far from the contact of any emotion—a God without love. What a contrast to the Christian's Friend who chose the Cross! What could such a negation do to touch or help the world, even if philosophy had allowed such a thought?

We have to study this early Church till we understand it. My last instance for to-day shall be a phrase which of itself proclaims the difference of outlook that the centuries have made. In some ten passages of the New Testament we find "the foundation of the

world," in connection with things and events dated before it, or contemporaneously with it, by the writers or speakers. We are not used to-day to vision of such range; and we have in consequence to shed a whole vocabulary, and perhaps "Providence" itself would go with them if we fortunately were not apt to be a little illogical.

But the difference of outlook is still more marked when we notice what kind of things the early Christian conceived as reaching through all history from "before the foundation of the Cosmos"—for he uses a technical term of Greek philosophy. He speaks of "names written in the book of the Lamb slain, from the foundation of the world"—this comes twice in the Apocalypse, while in the Epistle to the Ephesians the writer speaks of himself and his friends as "chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world." Finally the writer of the Fourth Gospel represents Christ as speaking of the glory which God had given Him, "for Thou lovedst Me before the foundation of the world."

Frankly, there is not a phrase among all these but comes with a shock, almost painful,

to a man bred in the thoughts of our day. They are repugnant to "the reason of the present age," nor to the reason of this age alone, as St. Paul very well saw. He was left in no manner of doubt as to the judgment of rational and educated people upon what he had to say—he, a poor Jewish *spermologos*, a journalist, as we might say to-day. It is perhaps remarkable how rarely the theologians of to-day deal with the conceptions we have picked out from these first-century documents, when one reflects that the Christians of most ages would not have recognised their faith, if stripped of them, for the same thing at all.

The early Christian conceived that to God Jesus Christ was not accidental, nor yet the unforeseen product of an evolution that might have miscarried. He held that there is a thread running through all history; that nothing walks with aimless feet; that a long progress intelligible to reason is also guided by reason, and that to no random goal. He held this because it was clear to him from what he saw, and from what he experienced, that Jesus Christ was lifting men to a new plane of life and thought, with the prospect of a

boundless vista of future developments upward. A religion is to be judged, not only by what it achieves in the present, but by the germinating forces it perpetually renews in the human heart—by its promise of power in the progressive disruption of every exhausted conception in favour of a higher. In Jesus the early Christian found such a hope, and he refused to believe Him to be accidental or anything short of God's highest revelation of Himself. And, in the clearest and most definite terms he could find, he said so—he said that, before the world was, God saw the end for which He worked, without accidents and without after-thoughts.

He went further; for, grasping that the essence of Christianity is the realisation by each individual soul that it is the object of God's individual love, he boldly carried this to the furthest point of possible emphasis—God knew His own before He ever set hand to creation—He fixed beforehand the day and hour, and worked ahead for those He loved, as a father (in the parable) starts working to win the bread before the child is hungry, and even before the child is born. God knew,

he said, and God arranged, at once for the great Cosmos and for the last and least of those who were to find in the Good Shepherd a new access to the heart of God. With one metaphor and another—a name written in a book, the paschal Lamb, the laying-down of the Cosmos—with endless variety of phrase, he tried to drive home to every man the supreme fact of God's love of each man, His long prevision of each and His long providence for each. He knew very well he was using metaphor. "For want of His name," said Clement, "we use beautiful names, that the mind may not wander at large, but may rest on these."* At all hazards he would make clear the great fact of God's love as antecedent to all things—of Christ as the embodiment of purposeful love—of the universe itself in all its range as a Cosmos indeed, inspired and achieved by love, and subservient in its last detail to love. And he aimed at doing this by use of the best language available to him, and very telling language it was.

Such thoughts may not commend themselves to us; we may be afraid of them, as

* Clem. Alex., *Strom*, ii., 74, 75.

too large, too sweeping, too bold. But two things may be said. These beliefs have a great history, as worthy to be studied as any other history—for we are bound to study the past till we understand it, and absorb it, if we are to make steady progress in the present. And, further, a faith congenial to "the reason and the humanity of the present age" (as history can show in many a surprising instance) is not always very sure of the respect of the next age. "A man's reach should exceed his grasp," as Browning said. We need a faith larger than we can be quite easy about, if it is to be of much real use to us.

I end with what I began with—this: we have to reckon, as serious people, with this story of the Church; to criticise it, not from without but from within; to understand how men came to speak as they spoke, and to feel as they felt. Criticism, to be just, must be identification. That is the duty before us. Before we decide as to the final truth of what they said, we must know to the full, and from within, the evidence from which they spoke, and the experience which gave them their premisses.

LECTURE V

Jesus in the Christian Centuries

OUR subject in this lecture is Jesus Christ in the Christian centuries. We shall not for the moment deal with the truth of the Christian religion, for our aim throughout is to enlarge our basis of facts before we embark upon opinion. We shall try to look into what the religion, true or false, has actually effected; and we shall take the belief in Jesus as itself a historical factor, in order, first of all, by measuring it against the forces with which it has had to contend, to reach some approximate measure of its real power. In doing this we ought to include some inquiry as to the sort of men and women affected—people like ourselves, with every variety of temperament and temptation. For there is nothing externally that marks the Church as a peculiar body of persons, unless, indeed, we recognise, as we may, that there is something unique in the range of

character and disposition to which it appeals, in the variety of natures which it wins and uses.* In the next place, we ought to ask whether a factor that works so uniformly for the good of mankind, and, with all deductions made that should be made for mistakes and wrong tempers incidental to all human nature, has forwarded the growth and development of the human race, is, after all, a mistake; whether, as some burning spirits suggest, it ought to be the main business of all illuminated people to rid the world of the Christian religion. We might go on to ask ourselves whether it could be dispensed with, and, if so, by what it could be replaced — by philosophy or economic changes, or both— or something else. And then we ought to ask whether there is not some test of truth in the correspondence between the needs of the human soul and the Christian Gospel. It is very often better for a lecturer to ask questions than to answer them; so, while my own way of dealing with them may not

* A closer study of the great Christian biographies would be a great reinforcement to the Churches to-day.

escape notice, I will not attempt categoric answers to these questions. What I urge, however, is that everything turns on how deeply we care to go into realities; and a large part of the lecture will be a repeated reminder that we need to go very deep indeed, if we wish to understand a human soul.

Let us begin by examining a contribution which the belief in Jesus has made to human life, which is apt to be overlooked. It is what we may call, in language not very readily intelligible to Anglo-Saxons of our day, but instantly significant to men of other races and other ages, the "Power of the Name." And here we shall have to make a short excursion into Folklore.

Herodotus, in a well-known passage, tells us that the women of Miletus would never call their husbands by name.* All over the world we come on the same reluctance to reveal names. We meet it in the story of Lohengrin, in the English fairy-tale, most readily identified by the refrain that is its gist:

Ninny, ninny, not,
Your name's Tot Tit Tot!—

* *Herodotus*, i., 146.

and in the strange fact, which Macrobius tells us, that the priests of ancient Rome had a secret name for their city.* For man, in the primitive stage, name and thing tend to be one in essence. The name is not a mere convention; in some deep, mysterious bond of nature it *is* the thing; and if anyone knows the name, he is master in some measure of the thing. Thus, if he learns the name of his enemy and has some familiar spirit (for instance) whose name he also knows, he can link these names in magic to his enemy's undoing.

In the early days of the Christian Church, in the Mediterranean world, as to-day among the animistic peoples, we find the minds of men infested with a belief, which to us is almost incomprehensible, in a whole world of spiritual beings or dæmons, as the Greeks called them. Elaborate accounts of the dæmons and their nature are given by Plutarch and Apuleius. They lived in the air; they were of mixed nature—something

* *Saturnalia*, iii., 9, 5. *Ipsius vero urbis nomen etiam doctissimis ignoratum est, caventibus Romanis ne quod saepe adversus urbes hostium fecisse se noverant ipsi quoque hostili evocatione paterentur si tutelae suae nomen divulgaretur.*

between gods and men, between whom they might serve as intermediaries. But they had many activities of their own—good and bad; and they were generally recognised as the chief dangers of human life. Some of them were beneficent—guardian powers; and, from one point of view, even the human soul itself might perhaps be a dæmon. The Egyptians assigned the human body, area by area, to thirty-six dæmons, whose aid would be invoked according to the part of the body affected by disease. Perhaps every passion was induced by some dæmon. Mischief of every kind was due to them—every ill legend of the gods was their work; every ugly, cruel, or obscene type of worship or sacrifice was inspired by them; and they were constantly the authors of disease and insanity. Such words as dæmoniac, nympholept, enthusiasm, obsessed, possessed, hag-ridden or bewitched —along with incantation, enchantment, and charm—tell, for those who can understand them, a long story of human trouble.*

* It may be permissible to refer to an article of my own in the *Hibbert Journal*, vol. xi., no. 1 (Oct. 1912), on "The Dæmon Environment of the Primitive Christians."

If a man, then, knew the names and affinities of these dæmon powers, he could use them, for the Neo-Platonist philosopher argued that the universe is a unity, all things linked to all, but some things more subtly connected; and therefore if, as a modern chemist uses a re-agent to act on some element or compound, a man will take in his hand a certain stone, and, pronouncing a certain name, will add a set form of prescribed words, he is also automatically bound to control some dæmon-power.* This, of course, he can set to harry anyone whose name he knows. This is the essence of all magic.

So far I have used the statements of Classical and non-Christian writers. This is supplemented by modern evidence. Under the dominion of spirits, the animistic heathen is "bound by three fetters—fear, demon-worship, and fate. . . . Even his own soul is a hostile power against which he must

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* *Cf.* Clem. Alex., *Protr.*, 58. The Indian name for the form of words is *mantra*. See C. F. Andrews' *Renaissance in India*, Appendix V., for Mrs. Besant's catechism. "Q. Does the order of the words matter? A. Yes. Q. Can a *mantra* be translated? A. If it be translated it loses its use."

ever be on his guard. It is fond of leaving him; it allows itself to be enticed away from him; it refuses to accept benefits from him. . . . Animism seems devised for purpose of tormenting men and hindering them from enjoying life. To that must be added fear of the dead, of demons, of the thousand spirits of earth, air, water, mountains, and trees."* Hinduism has incorporated much from such old beliefs, and has thirty *crore* of gods of one kind and another—three hundred millions.

Muhammadanism and Buddhism alike have failed to break the power of these spirits; Mrs. Besant and the Theosophists in India invoke modern science to defend the use of

* Warneck, *Living Forces of the Gospel* (tr.), pp. 108, 109. See also the most interesting book of my friend, Mr. J. C. Lawson: *Ancient Greek Religion and Modern Greek Folk-lore,* on the survival into modern Greece of the belief in nymphs and worse things. Mr. Lawson tells us (pp. 48, 131) how he once saw a Nereid—or at least something which his guide knew to be one, and would not wait to allow Mr. Lawson a closer investigation. Mr. Lawson says (p. 281) that people born on Saturday are credited with the power to see their guardian spirits, as well as second sight. His remarks on the survival of paganism in the Greek Church (p. 47) deserve study—it is the outcome of compromise centuries ago.

charms, spells, incantations, idolatry, and caste; they are covered by the vague term "magnetism." "The water of the Ganges was sacred because it was magnetised by the great *rishis*. Hindus bathed at the time of the eclipse to wash off the bad magnetism. Idols were to be worshipped because they were 'centres of magnetism' which is put into them by highly spiritual persons. The religious marks were worn on the forehead, because the 'materials used have magnetic properties.'"*

Evidence for all this belief in dæmons was found—and is found—in abundance in all illnesses,† especially sudden ones and those that affect the mind, in every unfamiliar occurrence, and in the oracles; and plenty was no doubt supplied by men who had any natural gifts for hypnotism and legerdemain. But the main point is that, evidence or no

* Andrews' *Renaissance in India*, p. 149.

† Mr. John Howell, of the Baptist Missionary Society, tells me that, on the Congo, natives stricken with sleeping-sickness will change their names (with proper ceremony) to hide their identity and so escape the spirits which have sent the disease. To be called, even accidentally, by their former names troubles them greatly.

evidence, the human mind was, and is, in such systems utterly depressed and paralysed.

Traces of the dæmon-belief, common to Jews as well as Gentiles, abound in the New Testament. The "prince of the power of the air that now worketh in the sons of disobedience" (Eph. ii. 2), the familiar "principalities and powers," can be supplemented freely, but two crucial passages will suffice. This, says Paul, "none of the rulers of this world knew; for, if they had known, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory" (1 Cor. ii. 8). And, again, "we wrestle, not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers,* against the world-lords of this darkness, against spiritual beings of evil in the sky above us; so take to yourselves the panoply of God" (Eph. vi. 12).

When, then, from all this we turn to "the name that is above every name," and read that at it the knees shall bow of things in the sky (Phil. ii. 10), the old phrase takes on a

* *Cf.* also Romans viii. 38, 39: "I am persuaded that . . . neither principalities nor powers . . . shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

new meaning.* The magician lets loose upon us all his allies—or they may come against us on their own account—evil dæmons, deceiving spirits, powers of darkness, disease, and terror—but we have a Name that is above every name. "Even the very name of Jesus is terrible to the dæmons," wrote Justin Martyr, tenderest and most beautiful of philosophers.† "This," wrote Tatian, speaking of the Gospel, "ends our slavery in the world and rescues us from rulers manifold and ten thousand tyrants."‡ "I was now taught," writes a modern Japanese Christian, Utschimura by name, "that there was only one God, and not many — over eight millions — as I had formerly believed. Christian monotheism laid its axe at the root of my superstition. . . . One God, not many—that was a glad message to my soul."§ "There used to be fairies here," said an old woman in the High-

* I do not suggest that this is its only meaning.

† Justin, *Dialogue with Trypho*, 30. Justin and Tatian belong to the middle second century.

‡ Tatian, 29.

§ Warneck, *Living Forces of the Gospel*, p. 211.

lands to a friend of mine, "but the Gospel came and drove them away."

One of the worst effects of this subjugation to dæmons is the hopeless fatalism it induces. Every impulse is the work of a dæmon; no effort is of any use; a man is a plaything of devil-powers, and his life is governed by stars above him. "It kills man's nobler nature, and degrades him to a piece of mechanism. . . . The very will for freedom is bound. . . . Exceptions to the average are more rare than among civilised nations."* "We," writes Tatian, on the other hand, "are above Fate, and, instead of dæmons that deceive, we have learnt one Master that deceiveth not," and he specially mentions Astrology as one of the evils from which he has been delivered.† It is a curious reflection that Astrology was the earliest form of scientific determinism.

Now let us sum up the matter. We shall not be in a hurry to commit ourselves to the

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* Warneck, *Living Forces of the Gospel*, p. 121.

† Tatian, 7, 8, 9. Compare a very interesting discussion by Tacitus, *Annals*, vi., 56. See Franz Cumont, *Astrology and Religion among the Greeks and Romans* (1912).

belief that there are such powers of evil about us, though men who know Paganism at first hand sometimes lean to the idea, and modern science has no evidence that they do not exist, and is indeed invoked (not very skilfully) to explain them. But we shall note that, whatever the truth about dæmons, where Jesus Christ comes in any real way into the hearts of men, He liberates them from all fears of supernatural enemies. He takes the terror out of life by making it possible—indeed, inevitable—that men live in the sunshine and warmth of God's love, "children of love," as an early Christian writer puts it;* and there is no other religion with anything like the bright atmosphere of love that the Incarnation makes. The terrors go like the night-fears of children when the room is flooded with light, and one they love stands by them. The mind is relieved of an intolerable incubus, that has militated more and more against its powers; and morality is made possible. Where animistic beliefs rule, all things are allowed to the mighty man with a strong soul; other

* Barnabas, 9, 8.

men are bound by custom; he is free to do what will secure his strength—a curious coincidence between the crudest heathenism and the philosophy of Nietzsche. Where Christ comes, morality is changed from custom into the spontaneous overflow of love to Him. Whatever our judgment upon Christ — whether we count Christianity pure delusion or half delusion—it does not alter the fact that by the belief in Him men are set free to think in peace of mind, and are lifted out of the slough of selfishness which superstition always makes. It becomes possible to appeal to conscience, and still more to a new love for Jesus Christ, that carries men far in all that makes for good. The savage eats his enemy to make his own heart braver; the Christian, if he takes Jesus seriously, identifies himself with his enemy in quite another way. The Cross teaches us a new spirit in which to approach those who hate us.

One thing more has to be added on this point. The religion of the Græco-Roman civilisation, in which St. Paul moved, like the religion of civilised India to-day, had many rites and ceremonies and sacred legends, full

of cruelty and obscenity. The purer spirits, like Plutarch, regretted this, and tried to explain that such things must be the work of evil dæmons—gods could not wish them; and yet it was possible, Plutarch clearly felt, that even the obscene thing was a symbol of something great and true. In fact, he could not break with tradition. Perhaps human sacrifices no longer continued in his day; the point is doubtful; but the shrines of Aphrodite still kept harlots, *hierodules*, whose service and whose earnings supported the temple, and whose life was therefore hardly sinful.* The same thing still prevails in modern Hinduism. The dedication of little children to such temples for such purposes is revolting to the

* The temple of Aphrodite at Corinth, Strabo says (c. 378), had at one time more than a thousand *hierodules*, "whom both men and women dedicated to the goddess"; the temple at Comana, in his own day, had six thousand (Strabo, c. 535, *cf.* J. G. Frazer, *Adonis*, p. 23); in Judaism they were prohibited (Deut. xxiii. 18), though the regular Hebrew word for a harlot means "consecrated woman" (*q'deshah*). For modern India, *cf.* Meredith Townsend, *Asia and Europe*, pp. 17, 101: "When, in Lord Dalhousie's time, a Bill was drawn for the prevention of overt obscenity, it was necessary to insert a clause that the Act should not apply to any temple or religious emblem."

better minds of India, but it is still religion. We need not dwell on such things. Jesus Christ finally lifted religion out of any region in which cruelty or uncleanness can be associated with it, and made the very word inaccessible to such taints, associating it with truth and peace and quietness, the service of men and a spiritual love of God.

In all this, whatever our final decision as to Christ, it is fairly clear for those who care for verifiable fact that the belief in Jesus has worked for the good of men, and especially of women. The significance of this comes out when we study modern Indian movements, and realise how for the Vedantist, as for Plutarch and the Neo-Platonist, there is a refined esoteric teaching for the initiate, while the crowd may go on as before with the old wickedness, miscalled religion. The Christian Gospel has the same implications for all men, educated or uneducated, in every relation of life, the same ideal of conduct and of truth. "One is your Master."

As our next instance of the working of the belief in Jesus, we may take the conviction that each individual man, however insignifi-

cant, is one "for whom Christ died." The phrase is Paul's. I will give three cases where it has been quoted or paraphrased, to show how it works.

About the year 412 A.D. a new governor came from Constantinople to Tripoli, and began to misuse the people he had to govern. Synesius, the most charming figure of the century, hunter and scholar and philosopher, a lover of books and dogs, and now bishop of the place all against his own inclination and sense of fitness, wrote boldly to the governor, and told him he was using men as if they were cheap; but "precious among creatures is man, precious in that for him Christ was crucified."* Synesius had not been quite sure in his own mind that he was properly and fully Christian, but need brought him to realise this aspect of the death of Jesus.

When Kett led his rebellion in Norfolk, some envoy of the Court came down to negotiate with him, and spoke of Kett's followers as "villeins." Kett's answer is worth

* Synesius, *Epist.* 57, 1388c.

remembering: "Call no man villein who was redeemed by the precious blood-shedding of Jesus Christ."

The third instance is one, the source of which I have lost. It comes from the eighteenth century, I think. A man, injured in some accident, was brought into a hospital, very near death, it seemed. One of the surgeons proposed some drastic treatment, adding, *fiat experimentum in corpore vili*—the easy quotation we all know. From the table, on which the injured man lay silent, came a Latin answer: *Non ita vile pro quo Christus mortuus est.*

In an earlier lecture I suggested that one of the tests we may apply to a religion is its power to protect men against us. Here, in this old belief, which embodies the very central proposition of the Gospel, that Christ died for every man, is, I think, the most powerful safeguard that the poor, the oppressed, the black man, and "ordinary people" have ever had against the great, whether kings or civil servants, experts and specialists, parliaments or plutocrats. Nothing so far in India has really shattered

caste except Christ. If Christ died for the pariah, it cannot defile the rest of us to touch one whom Christ loved.

A missionary has told me a tale from Bengal, which illustrates the matter. Village people, returning to their village, found a dead woman at the road-side, a little child beside her, alive and trying to wake her. No one would touch the woman or the child; they were wanderers, of unknown caste; and religion forbade, till some Christian converts came along, whose religion knew no caste.

Even so sympathetic a student of Jesus Christ as Wilhelm Bousset counts it something of a defect in orthodox Christianity that its system has not room for Bismarck—"If we accept in its entirety this conception, if, that is, we take from modern life its very essence, and force it to self-renunciation, we shall have absolutely to cast on one side such complete and great figures as those of Goethe and Bismarck." That may be so. The ideals of Bismarck are not those associated with the Cross; but which mean more for human good and happiness, or for progress? We have to realise that where Christ has touched

human character in earnest, the Bismarck ideals have been challenged at once, and all the school of Bismarck has always realised the danger of a free Gospel. A tame-cat clergy, with a gospel of a mailed fist, may be tolerable; but men, in whom Christ lives, and men prepared to champion their fellow-men in Christ's spirit—these are intolerable in any community ruled by the ideals of Bismarck, English, German, Russian, or Roman.

Let us take an illustration. William Tyndale, "further ripened in the knowledge of God's Word" at Cambridge, went to be chaplain in the house of Sir John Walsh at Little Sodbury; and there, in controversy with a learned man at his employer's table, he broke out with the words: "If God spare my life, ere many years I will cause a boy that driveth the plough shall know more of the Scripture than thou doest." His life was spared, and he printed that English Testament, which, with corrections and revisions far less significant than we think, we still use.* He was

* *Cf.* Demaus, *William Tyndale* (ed. 2), p. 234, on the reason for this.

carried further, and wrote *Of the Obedience of a Christian Man*, and other works, which did not commend themselves to those in authority.* Here is his conclusion: "The Gospel hath another freedom with her than the temporal regiment [*i.e*, government]. Though every man's body and goods be under the king, do he right or wrong, yet is God's word free and above the king; so that the worst in the realm may tell the king, if he do him wrong, that he doth naught, and otherwise than God hath commanded him; and so warn him to avoid the wrath of God." The seventeenth century shows what direct association with the Bible in English meant —in the planting of New England and the Civil War.† "The worst in the realm may tell the king," and they did, to some effect; and the results of seventeenth-century Puritanism in the history of the emancipa-

* The significance of Tyndale's work may be divined from the extraordinary and violent attack made upon him by Sir Thomas More, who devoted more than a thousand folio pages to him.

† On Bible-reading, see G. M. Trevelyan, *England under the Stuarts*, p. 60.

tion of mankind are still to receive additions. Does not Germany itself owe to Luther, and his resolve to make the Bible a people's book,* more than to the Bismarck school? If there are those who do not see the relation between the belief in Christ and human liberty, at all events the dread felt by governments in the last four hundred years for people who take the Bible seriously should be evidence enough — whether these governments be Spanish Courts or American Presidents and Cabinets fearful of slave-holders. It is not only that men possessed of the faith in Christ will assert the manhood and the rights of others, but their own, modestly it may be, but doggedly. But we need not turn to former centuries. What is the meaning of the dislike felt, and put into word and action, by government officials, traders, exploiters of native races, and rubber-dealers—reputable as well as indefensible—to the missionary, but simply this? That here is a man who, in his faith that Christ died for the black man, is pre-

* "This book is to be written in the simplest language that all may understand it"—Luther, letter of 30 March, 1522.

pared to insist that the white man shall not abuse him, whether his motive be private gain or good government. Christ's servant will be the friend of the people for whom Christ died; he may be misguided, and he will often be very inconvenient; but it means that, wherever the missionary is, there will be a reference of everything—trade, government, and personal conduct—to eternal standards rather than to a local magistrate's sense of expediency.

But we can go a good deal further, if we will look a little more into men. For we have to recognise that the belief in Jesus Christ has not merely been a restraining influence which has kept men from abusing their powers, but a deeper stimulus, which has worked in a progressive training of conscience and a new attitude toward those who need help and care. For instance, the late Dr. Verrall said that the radical disease, of which, more than of anything else, ancient civilisation perished, was an imperfect ideal of woman.* No one who is familiar with ancient literature

* *Euripides the Rationalist*, p. 111, note.

can deny this low estimate, which comes out most clearly when speakers and writers deal without emphasis with the ordinary ways of life. It is the same in India: "Day and night," say the Laws of Manu, "must women be kept in dependence by the male members of the family; they are never fit for independence; they are as impure as falsehood itself; this is a fixed rule." It seems clear that in the earliest Indian as in the earliest Greek literature woman is given a higher place than she had later. This is significant. Why, as civilisation advanced, should the belief in woman decline? In the story of the Church it is the other way. From the first Christians have tended to take their Master's view of woman, and have held "there is neither male nor female." Their methods of carrying out His principles, consistently with the standards of decency that have from time to time prevailed around them, show curious deflections, but it remains that the Church has steadily recognised the dignity of woman.

Nowhere in Classical literature—perhaps nowhere in non-Christian literature—is there

a teacher of men who is recorded to have taken the interest in children that Jesus did. The exposure of new-born children was common in Greece, and Plato and Aristotle tolerated it in their ideal Commonwealths. The plots of plays and romances turn upon it with wearisome iteration. So that it was not idly that the early Christian apologists emphasised the fact that Christians do not abandon their own offspring to death or the brothel, and keep parrots.* "The childless man falls short of the perfection of nature," says Clement of Alexandria.† "Who are the two or three gathering in the name of Christ, among whom the Lord is in the midst? Does He not mean man, wife, and child by the *three*, seeing woman is made to match man by God?"‡ We are apt to attribute a certain monopoly in some vices to Southern Europeans, and it is startling to find in the Icelandic *Saga of the Burnt Njal* such a passage as this: "This is the beginning of our

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* Clem. Alex., *Paed.*, iii., 30.

† Clem. Alex., *Strom.*, ii., 139, 5.

‡ Clem. Alex., *Strom.*, iii., 68, 1.

laws" (the Christian law-giver speaks), "that all men shall be Christians here in the land and believe in God, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, but leave off all idol-worship, not expose children to perish, and not eat horseflesh."*

Again, there is slavery, deeply rooted in ancient life, the gangrene at once of morality and industry, and it lasted on into the nineteenth century. Here it is curious to note how men, who theoretically believed in the complete inspiration of the whole Bible, brought a higher criticism to bear, and saw at a glance that the "mysterious destiny" assigned to Ham's descendants in virtue of drunken Noah's foolish curse was not of equal significance with Christ's death for the negro slave.†

The belief in Jesus has given men a keener insight and a warmer and quicker sympathy;

* *The Burnt Njal*, § 101 (Dasent's translation).

† Is it worth while noting that they were not content with "soothing and cheering the victims with hopes of immense and inexpensive happiness in another world when the process of working them to premature death in the service of the rich is complete in this," as Mr. Bernard Shaw suggests?

it has waked the dedicated spirit and taught new ways of service. Believing heart and soul in Jesus' death for men, Christians have given their lives to help their neighbours in the obvious duties of neighbourliness (which, as Jesus said, the publicans also do), to relieve poverty and to study its prevention, and, above all, to train the moral standards of their fellow-men, and to bring into their lives that experience of Christ to which they owe all themselves. This sense of being able to lead men to a living Christ who will do everything for them — the very keynote of all Christian service—stands or falls with the belief in Christ. What other religion has such a message of joy? Where are people, who can keep it right into old age, poverty and pain, apart from Christ? What other Gospel is there than His? Ethics are splendid subjects for discussion and for declamation; Christian principles have won much admiration; but where, apart from belief in Christ, is the force that can make anything of them? Think how that has stimulated men to lives like their Master's. "Christ," wrote Wycliffe, "saith within us every day: This I suffered

for thee, what dost thou suffer for me?"* Men, as we can see all over the world, are sporadically capable of wonderful lives of service and beauty; but when it comes to the use of poor material, who will make saints of that? Yet the belief in Christ has done it and does it still, affording the motive that makes the consecrated life a thing of increasing power. Let us ask ourselves what is the significance of the amount and quality of impulse that makes men missionaries and keeps them? Life among a primitive race is apt to be hateful, stripped of all the amenities we most prize, and exposed to everything that jars the nerves, from incessant vermin to intermittent murder;† what is it that takes men

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* *Christus dicit in nobis cotidie: Hoc passus sum pro te, quid pateris pro me?* See Lechler, *John Wycliffe and his English Precursors* (2nd edition, Engl. tr.), p. 273, n.

† *Cf.* Livingstone, *Travels in South Africa*, chapter xii. (end): "During a nine weeks' tour I had been in closer contact with heathens than I had ever been before; and though all were as kind and attentive to me as possible, yet to endure the dancing, roaring, and singing, the jesting, grumbling, quarrelling, and murderings of these children of nature, was the severest penance I had yet undergone in the course of my missionary duties. I thence derived a more intense disgust of paganism than I had hitherto felt, and

and women into it and keeps them there glad and eager—without books or friends, and their children thousands of miles away? This is one of the effects of the Belief in Jesus Christ.

Plato, long before Jesus was born, spoke to men of a last judgment, at which Minos, naked, should with very soul contemplate the very soul of each in turn immediately after death, "alone, without a kinsman beside him, all the trappings of his life left behind on earth."* Other men wove apocalypses round myths after Plato; and no doubt it contributed something to morality. But think of the contrast of these myths with the Christian conviction of the Great White Throne—no myth, but a certainty.

Tuba mirum spargens sonum
Per sepulcra regionum
Cogit omnes ante thronum.

Mors stupebit et natura,
Cum resurget creatura
Judicanti responsura.

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formed a greatly elevated opinion of the effects of missions in the south, among tribes which are reported to have been as savage as the Makololo."

* *Gorgias*, 523 E.

Look at these lines—their strange simplicity of language, so closely in touch with the awful simplicity of the thought, their freedom from artifice, their austere beauty—no random products of happy accident, nor the ingenious work of artifice. The whole scene lives and moves before the poet's eyes—he does not frame it, he can hardly be said even to imagine it—there it is; and in nine words he draws it, with no syllable of comment or reflection. Is there anywhere in human speech so much in nine words? And then a new thought burns with pain in the poet's heart—for he grasps that he is no mere spectator—he stands alone before the Throne; so far as he is concerned, heaven and earth have fled away, as in the great description in the Apocalypse; and he cries aloud:

Quid sum miser tunc dicturus,
Quem patronum rogaturus,
Cum vix justus sit securus?

What has this belief carried with it—this recognition that the world and the individual are judged in the last resort by Jesus Christ, that His standards prevail, that the last word

is the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ? That from the scene every vindictive element is eliminated, makes all more serious. Through the steady facing of this ultimate judgment of all life by God, in accordance with the standards set in the holiness and tenderness of Jesus Christ, the Christian community has achieved and kept a new recognition of the responsibility of the individual, with the result of added concentration on the training of the soul. Goethe speaks of "what an inaccessible stronghold *that* man possesses who is always in earnest with himself and with the things around him." How could a man be more in earnest with himself and with the things around him than by living as Christians have constantly done in full view of the Great White Throne? Think of the self-criticism induced—of the steady reference of everything to Christ's standards from beginning to end—of the spiritual force there is for the individual Christian in the consciousness of his nexus with Christ, past, present, and eternal. It is possible to measure something of what it all means by remarking what happens when

the belief disappears—a lowering of tone and a certain hardening. If Christian teaching here be set against Stoic or Buddhist, the contrast is illuminating. Which has laid most stress on the seriousness of life, and on the importance of the individual man, and done it most effectively? And human progress depends at once on the value set by all upon the individual and the earnestness with which he lives his life. In these matters there are few things in history to match for significance and worth the plain Gospel of the Christian Church, that Christ died for the man, and Christ will judge him.

But beside the historical effect of this doctrine, we have to study its origin. How came the Christian community, within one generation of Calvary, to the conviction that the historical Jesus, whom they had known, with whom they had talked and travelled—a crucified provincial, and one of many such—was to sit upon the judgment-seat of the universe? The cross and the throne were surely incompatible ideas; and yet they are linked deliberately—and for the sake of a man whom they had passed on the street.

What was the experience that led the followers of Jesus to a faith like this?

"The love of Christ constrains us," said Paul. After all, if we wish to understand Christianity, we must come closer in to it, and consider, not merely what it has done to safeguard and to develope society, but what it is for those to whom it yields most of its meaning. What has come from the sense that the Christian has always had, clearly or dimly—of being the object of the love of Christ, of having been sought by Him, and found, and redeemed by Him, of being to Christ not a mere item of humanity, but a person and dear to Him? What has been the effect of the peace and joy of belonging to Him, of being His? Here it may be objected that this is just Christian folklore—not a very impressive criticism; but once more we will look into the thing, and try to be sure that we understand it, before we pronounce upon it.

Mr. Lowes Dickinson, in one of his essays, suggests that to "most of the best men" the whole conception of miserable sinners redeemed by Jesus Christ is "simply without any meaning at all." So, too, it appears to

animistic savages, who are mostly not very conscious of any sinfulness or of much responsibility. But with men who grapple with life in earnest, and find how, when it is taken seriously, it teems with problems of action and responsibility, a more severe sense is found of what is asked of them. "The contest with Evil, we feel, is the essence of our moral life. But then, on the other hand, the contest, our faith must suggest, is relevant to world-issues, somehow essential to the whole. In fighting for Good we are assisting something real that is divine." These, again, are Mr. Lowes Dickinson's words in the same essay; they represent, apparently, his own view; they are certainly very like what a Christian would have said. But a Christian would add: Supposing that, in this contest relevant to world-issues, where, in fighting for Good, I ought to be assisting something real that is divine, I have in point of fact failed—fallen, that is, below what, I see, was the ideal conduct and was perhaps possible? Seneca, the Stoic, felt something of this, and used to survey every night his day's failures and successes: "I hide nothing from myelf; I

pass over nothing. For why should I be afraid of any of my errors, when I can say: 'See that you do it no more, now I forgive you.'"* Seneca was a lovable man, but even his friends have to own that other people, rightly or wrongly, did not forgive him quite so easily. At all events, there are many, and these among the best of men, who cannot forgive themselves and have not done it—men who feel in sober earnest that if they are not to be burdened for ever with past failure, if they are to be clear of old taints, if they are to be relieved of the obstacles that, as a result of the characters they have developed, block their access to other men, it must be by another, and that this other is in plain fact Christ Himself. That is the common Christian belief, shared by all the Christian communities; and, if Mr. Lowes Dickinson is right, "most of the best men" must, *ex hypothesi*, be outside those communities. Each man must decide this for himself; but our present concern is to see what the love of Jesus is for those who find

* Seneca, *de ira*, iii., 36, 3.

most in Him, and one point, on which they are all agreed, is this belief that in Him the sin of the past is taken away. They certainly live on the basis of being able, by His strength daily given, to overcome the repeated impulse of evil from without or from within, and of being, in the New Testament phrase, "kept by the power of God." "We are more than conquerors through Him that loved us." That is the Christian language, right or wrong.

With this aspect of Christ as the giver of the victory over disorder, as the one power that can "keep our hearts and thoughts,"* we may associate the contribution of the historical Jesus and the permanent Christ to sanity in the common business of life, to the quiet mind, to sense in religion. Here is a religion that is not trance or ecstasy, nor ritual and ceremony, neither delirium nor δρώμενα, "but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit"; and this works out in the most ordinary affairs of human inter-

* Perhaps it is worth while to note that, Phil. iv. 7, St. Paul wrote "thoughts," and a little study of his experience of thoughts and their movements may explain what he meant.

course. Neither George Fox nor John Wesley started with any idea of an immense development of English industry and commerce, as the result of his work—very far from it. They thought of eternal life. How, then, have the societies they founded done so much in English trade? When one reflects upon the material on which Wesley, at any rate, had to work, the wonder grows. It is evident that conversion meant in hundreds of cases what it means still—a clearing of brain, and a disentangling of faculty, which, quite apart from spiritual things (if one may use so careless a phrase), involve an extraordinarily heightened effectiveness in the mundane affairs of buying and selling, making and planting, guiding and directing.

Have we studied enough the place of prayer in the ordering of life and in the development of character? What does its perpetual reference of everything to the will of Christ mean in self-criticism and self-correction? Do we realise enough what Christian people have gained in every way from this constant reminder of the love of Jesus, of His life and death, and the associa-

tion of the soul with its Saviour? There are those who call all this delusion, auto-suggestion, and the like. We may ask if any other delusion, any other variety of auto-suggestion, has done so much in making solid character, sane, healthy, normal, and effective? Can we persuade ourselves that in a rational universe delusion does better than truth? Prayer, we must remember, for the Christian is nothing without Jesus Christ. It is worth while to weigh the effect of the love of Jesus in this direction also.

With this we may connect the new attitude to pain. Jesus Himself, we read, deliberately associated Himself, His claims, and His nature, with suffering. That fact the Church could not forget, nor would its critics allow it to forget it. He was "crucified in weakness," and it was remarked that He refused the anæsthetic draught. And a part of the Christian life, for Paul, at least, was identification with Christ on this side of His experience—"the fellowship of His sufferings." "With Stupidity and sound Digestion man may front much," wrote Carlyle in *Sartor*, but these are not the endowments with which

the Christian faces pain—he is sensitive to it, and must be, if he is to do his work in the world. How else can he have sympathy with people whose first need it is? What, then, has it meant to men to realise the first-hand knowledge of pain that Jesus Christ had, pain of body and mind and heart—to know that He understands what He is to heal?

I have been told by a missionary from India that once, ill with fever, she lay groaning, and, I suppose, scarcely knowing what she said or why, she kept repeating "Ah! me! ah! me!" Her *ayah* overheard her and, mistaking the syllables, said: "Yes, Memsahib, that is it; Amen! Amen!" and the white woman learned anew the lesson she had come to teach. This is the effect of the love of Jesus in making men and women willing to bear pain as long as He chooses they shall, in the faith that what His love assigns or tolerates is not very much amiss. It, too, must have contributed more to mankind than we remember. Think of Bunyan's contentment to be in prison, "God . . . satisfying of me that it was His will and mind

that I should be there," and his resolve after twelve years of it to continue there on the same terms "till the moss shall grow on mine eyebrows."

On this follows naturally the new life of joy that we find in the Christian Church—the new song, as it is called in the Apocalypse. "A *musical* thought," says Carlyle,* "is one spoken by a mind that has penetrated into the inmost heart of the thing; detected the inmost mystery of it, namely the *melody* that lies hidden in it; the inward harmony of coherence which is its soul, whereby it exists, and has a right to be, here in this world. All inmost things, we may say, are melodious; naturally utter themselves in Song. . . . All deep things are Song. It seems somehow the very central essence of us, Song; . . . See deep enough, and you see musically; the heart of Nature *being* everywhere music, if you can only reach it."

The early Christian did reach it. The Holy Spirit, said Hermas, is a glad spirit.† Synesius

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* *Heroes and Hero Worship*, Lecture III.

† Shepherd of Hermas, *Mandates*, 10, 31.

was told the same by old men when he was depressed at becoming a bishop, and they also told him that the Holy Spirit gladdens His partakers.* Augustine found the Church glad; and so it goes on through the ages.† The hymn-book is a volume of Christian evidences—the product of generations of thinking and living. Thought and feeling, inherited experience and individual experiment, all go to the making of a great hymn. We do not give enough attention to what lies behind, and lies in, our hymn-books. How much man—so to speak—must there be in a hymn, or any poem, if it is to last a generation, and many generations, and still express the deepest thought and experience of God that men know? How much of life is there in *Jesu dulcis memoria?* It has to be remembered, too, that the hymn-book is in the main a Christian product. Cleanthes wrote a sort of hymn to Zeus or Fate; but nobody sang it. The Christian hymn implies the congregation—an entire community shar-

* Synesius, *Ep.* 57, p. 1389, Migne.

† *Cf.* Clement of Alexandria, *Paed.*, i., 22: The Church the one body that remains rejoicing always and for ever.

ing the same happiness; and Jesus Christ is the "inmost thing" whence it all comes.

Thus, the biographer of Francis of Assisi writes: "Drunken with the love and compassion of Christ, the blessed Francis did at times make such songs, for the passing sweet melody of the spirit within him, seething over outwardly did oftentimes find utterance in the French tongue, and the strain of the divine whisper that his ear had caught would break forth into a French song of joyous exulting. At times he would pick up a stick from the ground, and setting it upon his left shoulder, would draw another stick after the manner of a bow with his right hand athwart the same, as athwart a viol or other instrument, and, making befitting gestures, would sing in French to the Lord Jesus Christ."* Poetry, as Wordsworth put it, is "the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings."†

I take one illustration only—a hymn made by the first English hymn-writer, the mystic

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* *Speculum Perfectionis*, cap. xciii. *The Mirror of Perfection*, tr. Sebastian Evans, p. 165.

† Preface to *Lyrical Ballads*, 1800.

Richard Rolle of Hampole (? 1290-1349), a precursor in some ways of the Reformation, *e.g.*, in his emphasis on the love of Christ. He marks three stages in his course, which he calls *calor, canor,* and *dulcor;* and the singing came to him by surprise, and after that his experience is what he says quite simply: *Totiens glorior, quotiens nominis tui, Jesu, recordor.* His theory of the religious life is *in amore Dei canere et jubilare quasi raptus super terrena, in se deficere et in Deum pergere.* Here are a few of his verses:*

I sytt & syng of lufe-langyng þat in my hert es bred:
Ihesu my keyng & my joyng, whyne[1] war I to þe led?
Ful wele I wate in al my state, in joy I sulde be fed:
Ihesu me bryng til þy wonyng,[2] for blode þat þou hase sched.

Demed he was to hyng,[3] þe faire aungels fode:
Ful sare þai gan hym swyng,[4] when þat he bunden[5] stode,
His bak was in betyng, & spylt hys blissed blode,
Þe thorn corond þe keyng, þat nayled wās on þe rode.[6]

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* The Latin sentences will be found in Horstman's edition of Rolle, vol. ii., Introduction, p. xiv. The verses are in vol. i., p. 76.

[1] Why not? [2] Dwelling. [3] Hang. [4] Beat. [5] Bound. [6] Cross.

Whyte was his naked breste, & rede his blody syde,
Wan was his faire face, his woundes depe & wyde;
Þe iewþis[7] wald not wande to pyne[8] hym in þat tyde:
Als streme dose of þe strande, his blode gan downe glyde.

Blynded was his faire ene, his flesch blody for-bette;
His lufsum lyf was layde ful low & saryful vmbesette.
Dede[9] & lyf began to stryf whether myght maystre mare,
When aungels brede was dampned to dede[9] to safe oure sauls sare.

Lyf was slayne & rase agayne, in faire-hede[10] may we fare;
And dede[9] es broght til litel or noght, & kasten in endless kare.
On hym þat þe boght hafe al þi thoght, & lede þe in his lare[11];
Gyf al þi hert til Crist þi qwert,[12] & lufe hym ever-mare.

If Art is the offspring of Joy, we have also to remember Charles Lamb's emphasis on the sanity of true genius. When, then, we find in the Christian life the combination of the deepest and intensest joy with sanity and self-discipline, we have surely favourable conditions for great Art. While Christ's teaching

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[7] Jews. [8] Torment. [9] Death. [10] Beauty. [11] Learning. [12] Joy.

seemed to some to suggest that all things temporal are vain, to others it was as clear that the historical Jesus did not live in a vain show — rather in a beautiful world, the work of His Father. Historically, in Christ Art found itself again, and produced great works of deeper significance. The new value of life and of man was bound to tell. This is one way in which the joy associated with the belief in Jesus Christ has affected mankind. It is a large subject, and it would take us too far and too wide in historical research to pursue it; for the moment all we can do is to note that the debt of Art to the Gospel is far larger than people of the artistic temperament sometimes recognise. Their quarrel is with its control—and control is yet the one thing needful for such temperaments, if they are to achieve Art.

Two points only I wish to suggest while we are dealing with Joy. Most of us miss a good deal of its value, because we confuse it with more fugitive emotions, and come to look on it as a mere idle flash, like summer lightning that illumines nothing. That is

superficial criticism, as Wordsworth would tell us:

> With an eye made quiet by the power
> Of harmony, and the deep power of joy,
> We see into the life of things.

A great poet is apt to be more of a psychologist than we suppose, and a saying like this, taken with Wordsworth's description of the poet as one "who looks at the world in the spirit of love,"* should lead us to a truer estimate of Joy and its significance. With this in our minds we shall be less disposed to undervalue Joy as an index to fundamental Truth; and when we realise the perennial joy that keeps breaking out in the Christian community, with its "deep power" of insight, work, and endurance, we shall be better able to measure the meaning of the love of Jesus.

For, in the next place, the joy that springs from love, like love itself, points to a personal centre. If Wordsworth's love of Nature and joy in Nature seem to suggest that this is wrong, the reply is that for Wordsworth

* Preface to *Lyrical Ballads*, 1800.

neither was Nature impersonal, nor were animals, or even flowers and plants, incapable of personal feelings.* It is the abstract noun that is the most hopeless of all things, barren of comfort and barren of power. That sort of mistake the Christian Church has generally managed to avoid, and the reason lies in the fact that the very source of everything was for the Church a historic personality. There have always been people for whom an abstract proposition is invariably more convincing than a fact; but most of us walk better with at least one foot at a time on earth. It has been the salvation of the Church that Jesus was a person, and not a doctrine. No one, as Dr. Rendel Harris once put it, can sing

How sweet the name of *Logos* sounds!

On the contrary, Giacopone dei Todi, the friend of St. Francis, comes far nearer the real thing in his hymn on the Nativity:†

Fac me vere congaudere
Jesulino cohaerere
Donec ego vixero.

Our last point in this long lecture shall

* See *Lines written in Early Spring*, 1798.

† *Cf.* Sabatier, *Life of St. Francis of Assisi*, p. 286.

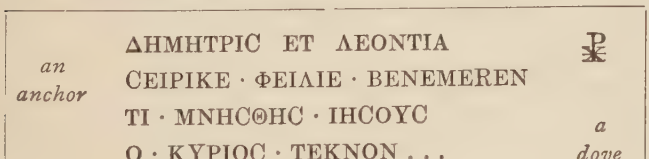
be to remind ourselves of the place of Hope in Christian experience:

> Hope, the paramount *duty* that Heaven lays,
> For its own honour, on man's suffering heart.

Hope is not an easy virtue. There is death to grapple with—and all men's theories of death—extinction and the transmigration of souls, "eternal re-dying" as it has been called. Life, when one is young and forgets age and death, is a gay thing for the pagan; but every pagan litany ends in a shriek of terror, or the grim, set teeth and hard mouth of despair. From the first, however, it has been noticed that the inscriptions on Christian graves in the catacombs and elsewhere have a different note from those the pagan carved.* The belief

* *Cf.* Marucchi, *Christian Epigraphy* (Eng. tr.), No. 34:

and No. 84, a curious combination of Greek and Latin:



in immortality rested on Jesus Christ, and there it still rests—a faith that finds help in several suggestions of value, but in the long run rests on Him.* Men who believe in Him will take the risk of there being no eternal life; in any case they do not care much about it apart from Him.

The Christian martyr deserves more sympathetic study than he has had. There were foolish and noisy martyrs, but their talk need not obscure for us their action. Still, in the main, the martyrs were quiet and composed. "Miserablest mortals," writes Carlyle when he reaches Louis XVI. on the scaffold, "doomed for picking pockets, have a whole five-act Tragedy in them, in that dumb pain, as they go to the gallows, unregarded; they consume the cup of trembling down to the lees. For Kings and for Beggars, for the justly doomed and the unjustly, it is a hard thing to die." Yet, with a full sense of pain and shame and popular execration, utterly unhelped by human sympathy, men and

* *Cf.* Herrmann, *Communion with God*, p. 290 (Eng. tr.): "We cannot think of the personal life of Jesus as something that could ever be given over to annihilation."

women faced death, quite gladly, and quietly.* It is easy to say: "Yes, they looked beyond, and did it for eternal rewards." Eternal rewards look poor on the other side of the *vivicomburium*, the stake and the faggots. The motive, however, was not the thought of what Jesus Christ would do for them, but a great consciousness of what He had done, of what He was—sheer gratitude and love.†

The same sure hope shows itself in work and service. Marcus Aurelius' famous Diary is surely the most desperately hopeless book ever written. Omar and Ecclesiastes have a clear enjoyment of their literary work; Marcus had as little joy or hope as ever man had who got through a life of work without hanging himself. But the Christian did not work without hope. "Christ lives," wrote

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*Clement of Alexandria (*Strom.*, ii., 125) quotes Zeno's saying, that the sight of one Hindu enduring the flame was better than all the declamations about pain, and he points, not unjustly, to "the boundless fountains of martyrs daily before our eyes, being burnt, impaled, and beheaded." On martyrdom, perhaps the best things to read are Tertullian's *Scorpiace* and *On Flight in Persecution.*

† See on this Clement of Alexandria, *Strom.*, iv., 14, on love to the Lord as the motive in martyrdom.

Luther, "and does not sit at the Emperor's but at God's right hand, else we should have been lost long ago."* The vision of the triumphant Christ may seem to some a fancy; yet what it has meant in constraining power and in resultant victory it is not easy to compute. It is the men who have believed in the eventual supremacy of Christ who have won Him what supremacy He yet has, though they themselves—justly enough—would say that it was He who did it through them. The great note of Christian song is given in the Apocalypse: "Thou wast slain and Thou hast redeemed us. . . . To the Lamb be blessing and honour and glory and power for ever and ever."

Throughout this lecture I have tried to set out side by side what has been actually achieved by the Christian Church and in the Christian man, and what the Church—the community at large and the individual in particular—has said to explain how such things were achieved. My task has been history rather than philosophy; and if the

* Letter of 9 July, 1530, to Justus Jonas.

Church's language has been dreadfully unphilosophic in the judgment of some people, still, it is the historian's business to remember Othello's bidding:

> Speak of me as I am; nothing extenuate,
> Nor set down aught in malice.

We shall not understand Church or saint, republic or trust company, poet or warrior, on the basis of a revised version toned down to suit *a priori* judgments. We must have the actual—word and deed, however foolish; and we must remember—especially the historian must remember—that word and deed are nothing till they glow with the light of the whole personality behind them. This and that the Church has done; this and that, one Christian saint or another; and we know it. Nothing in this lecture is unfamiliar or out of the way. It is all as common as can be; not a street-corner crowd with a Salvationist officer in its centre, but the story of the Church in the centuries is there. My task is to remind you of what you know, and to ask if we understand it in all its wonder and significance. Not till then can our opinion

be final. It is a story of power. The language of the Church and its explanations may be all wrong; but it represents a real force. If there is better language to express that force, let us have it by all means;* but if the better language leaves out, as sometimes happens when tales are improved, the gist of the whole story—then the old language will be nearer the fact. The Christian Church has tried again and again to express what most it means in other language, but it has not succeeded; it can find no other account of love and power than that they are bound up with Jesus Christ.

* Supposing the better language found, the first experiment might be to substitute it for the familiar expressions of the New Testament, and to see how the book read when *Jesus* had been eliminated in favour of the more accurate expression.

LECTURE VI

The Criticism of Jesus

SO far in the course, of which this is the last lecture, our aim has been to discover along what lines we may reach the actual experience of the Christian Church —setting fact, in the first place, before theory, in the endeavour to understand what the Church means before we pronounce upon it. From the start we have realised that experience is hard to grasp in its fulness in any case, and is only to be known by such an identification as will let the original factors act upon the mind again, and, as far as possible, in the original way. Point by point, in our study of the Church and its experience, we have been brought back to Jesus Christ, for at each step we found the Christian community at one in the conviction that everything depends upon Christ. In every phase of its life the one thing that decisively differentiates its experience from

that of the world around is its relation to Him. He is the historical source of the whole movement; He is the moving factor still;—such, rightly or wrongly, is the fixed belief of the Christian Church, after a great deal of experiment, both in trying to minimise the place He must hold, and in trying to avail itself of what it calls "the unsearchable riches of Christ." Throughout, a tacit challenge is offered to the critic: "Do you understand *Him?* Do you see what it is that drives the Church back on to Him in every age and in every situation?" Great as the part has been which the Christian communities have played in human history, the whole, according to the Christian, is, after all, a mere phase of the activity of Jesus Christ. The statement may sound preposterous or paradoxical, but for the moment it does not concern us to pronounce judgment upon it. Our business —as we have agreed so often—is to realise before we judge; and, however odd the fundamental conviction of others may sound to us, we have to see for ourselves what they really mean, and what they are trying to express—not least when this conviction is strongly held

by a community the thoughts and lives of whose members have so profoundly affected human history.

This lecture will be devoted to the consideration of some methods of approach to the pivotal question in every study of the Christian movement—viz., the personality which is its centre. No man, however possessed of truth himself, can make up the mind of another; Jesus Himself never attempted to do that for anyone; but it is possible to put evidence before men, or, better still, to suggest ways in which they may apprehend it for themselves by personal adventure.

Why must we undertake to form any judgment upon Jesus Christ? Why is it impossible to let Him alone? In the first place, because we are confronted by the historical Christian Church, and cannot get away from it, however much some of us may wish to be rid of it. The Christian Church is there; the whole of Christian history is there, with all the endless ramifications of influence it has exerted upon mankind. To refuse to consider such matters is to cut ourselves off from humanity and its experience, to count

too much of it alien to us. It is only possible to be human as one is open in heart and mind to the life of all men; and to be closed to what has meant so much is to be half-men at best, to lack that sympathy and intelligence for others which makes us men, and by which alone we can hope to grow. We cannot by our own choice cut ourselves off from the deepest force mankind has known—a factor as powerful in the present as in the past—and keep our manhood undiminished.

There the Christian Church stands, and in the centre of all things for it is Jesus of Nazareth. There are those who make desperate efforts to disprove His historicity, to convince themselves that He never existed. Such endeavours are quite intelligible; if the Christian Church has to be got rid of, Jesus, the historical Jesus, must go first; and every attempt made to torture historical evidence to suggest that He never taught and never was crucified at all, is a recognition that for the Church all depends on Him.

A religion, it is sometimes urged, is the weaker for having an historical figure as its

centre and resting on an historical basis; and Christianity, accordingly, is doomed to share the fortunes of the historical Jesus. Thus the Swami Vivekananda, the great leader of the Vedantic movement in modern India,* urges that Hinduism alone can be the universal religion for mankind, for "all the other religions have been built round the life of what they think an historical man, and what they think their strength is really their weakness, for smash the historicality of the man and the whole building tumbles to the ground. Half the lives," he continues, "of these great centres of religion have been broken into pieces, and the other half are doubted very seriously. As such, every truth that has its sanction only in their words vanishes into air again." We need not discuss the Swami's principles, which bear the usual marks of quick thinking, but we may accept one of his sentences and apply it to Jesus Christ, for whom he no doubt designed it: "Smash the historicality of the man and the whole building tumbles to the ground."

* See C. F. Andrews, *The Renaissance in India*, pp. 128-132, 158-159; Meredith Townsend, *Asia and Europe*, pp. 252-260.

Whether a religion needs a historical basis, or is better without one, is another issue, and is at best a rather abstract question. The main issue here for us is the historicity of Jesus. If the ordinary canons of history, used in every other case, hold good in this case, Jesus is undoubtedly an historical person. If He is not an historical person, the only alternative is that there is no such thing as history at all—it is delirium, nothing else; and a rational being would be better employed in the collection of snuff-boxes. And if history is impossible, so is all other knowledge.

Another line, however, is suggested, which has the merit of sense, and has, moreover, such support as some supposed historical parallels will give. Jesus, it is conceded, is, of course, historical, as Zoroaster, Buddha, Socrates, and Muhammad are historical. Each of these four gave mankind a great impulse, and so did Jesus; and neither in their case nor in His does the value of the religion rest on the person of the teacher. The suggestion is attractive, but one or two things diminish its importance. In neither of the four parallel cases can it be said, as

in the case of Jesus, that the influence of the teacher as a personality has not declined as the generations have separated men from him. The schools of Socrates and of Zoroaster are practically extinct—apart from two interesting but small communities of Zoroastrians in Yazd and Bombay.* Buddha's religion or philosophy is not, in the form in which he taught it, a faith that greatly moves the masses of mankind. The religion of Islam bears on it, indeed, the impress of Muhammad's personality—a fatal inheritance, which keeps men in a backwater wherever the religion of the Quran really prevails. On the other hand, no one can say that since the Reformation the Christian nations have been retarding the world's progress. We may lament that they have had so many wars and been guilty of so much wrong done against primitive peoples, but we must recognise that these defects they share with all mankind, while the progress is their own. There is *something* about Christianity, candid students of human affairs will admit, that is of value. What is it?

* On the Zoroastrians of Yazd, see E. G. Browne's delightful *Year among the Persians*, chapters xiii. and xiv.

What is the real value of Christianity? There are those who say at once: "Not its theology." That, they urge, stands very much on a level with similar constructions, as fanciful and as unproven, which other religions can show; there is little choice in Folklore, they tell us. But the ethics of Christianity are sounder. Christians may not actually manage to "love their neighbours as themselves,"—indeed, some clever people say it is better they should not *quite* succeed at it—but their average decent grasp of the ideas of altruism and social service is a good thing for society, and it would be a pity if it were lost. On the other hand, it is sometimes urged against the Gospel that it is essentially in its ethics that it fails; that it teaches men submission and contentment, to turn the other cheek and to bear with oppression, confiscated cloaks and commandeered miles; that it is, in reality, by now, essentially an engine of middle-class industrial tyranny.*

* Mr. Bernard Shaw, for instance, says: "Christianity, in making a merit of such submission, has marked only that depth in the abyss at which the very sense of shame is lost" —and so on. History is against him, if that counts.

Whatever has to be said of Jesus, no one can read the Gospels with any intelligence and suggest that He was the emissary of any government or middle class, inculcating ideas to secure their predominance. However much may be uncertain, it is certain that He was an original man — earnest, quick, clear-sighted, and fearless, no man's agent. If oligarchies and despotisms have used the Church that bears His name, and applied parts of His teaching to their own ends, they have had as often reason to regret it when men caught His mind and studied His thoughts un-garbled. His teaching, He would have said, was never meant for second-hand use. He, at all events, never aimed at being a captain of echoes. It is not real criticism to judge Him by echoes, nor by organisations that have lived on echoes.

We turn, then, to His teaching—to that "sublime ethic" in which we are told to look for the real value—and here we find unexpected allies. Modern Jewish students of ancient Judaism tell us that there is very little that is original in the teaching of Jesus, as Christian scholars would see if they would

take the trouble to go to the original documents instead of lazily depending on St. Paul or the warped narratives of the Gospels.* Even the so-called Golden Rule is found in a negative form in one of the Jewish fathers.† Jewish morality, it is said, has been steadily written down; it has always been as good as Christian, and the great Jewish moralists have

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*For a thorough-going defence of Jew and Pharisee, see Gerald Friedlander, *The Jewish Sources of the Sermon on the Mount* (London, 1911). His view is that "the career of Jesus as prophet and Messiah was an entire failure" (p. 6); "the Lord's prayer is merely an adaptation of nine verses of Ezekiel" (p. 165); "we have not seen any good reason to prefer the teaching of Jesus to that of the Old Testament, and of the Scribes and Pharisees" (p. 45). Mr. Friedlander's polemic against Mr. Claude Montefiore is significant. A very different view of Pharisaism is taken by another Jewish scholar of the same name—Moriz Friedländer—"brought up," as with real feeling he says in self-defence, "in Pharisaism, which I learnt to know from its noblest and deepest side, which I *lived* up to manhood."

† It is interesting to find the same kind of comment in Mr. Yoshio Markino's book, *When I was a Child* (p. 93). "The latter [the New Testament] was a great disappointment for me. Of course, the Sermon on the Mountain is very high ethic, but these were not new lessons to me. Many Oriental philosophers have talked about the ethics equal to that sermon long, long ages before." The book is full of interest for anyone concerned in any way with the spreading of Christianity in the non-Christian world.

a parallel for everything of worth in Christianity.

To this reasoning two replies have recently been made. The Jewish scholar, Moriz Friedländer, frankly takes the line that Jesus offered the Pharisees something higher than they knew, and that they made a fatal mistake in refusing it.* Wellhausen's famous reply takes the Jewish attack more simply—"Yes, it is all in the Talmud—and how much else!"

We may, however, ask a further question. Is it only because there is inferior matter in the Talmud that Christ prevailed? Is the world really so apt to be moved by moral maxims? By catchwords, yes—men in groups

* Moriz Friedländer, *Die Religiöse Bewegungen innerhalb des Judentums im Zeitalter Jesu* (Berlin, 1905); *Synagoge und Kirche in ihren Anfänge* (Berlin, 1908). He speaks of Jesus "being like a meteor streaming in light across the world, whose kindling and enlightening rays could never again be extinguished"; "and if that light was veiled (*verhüllt*) by short-sighted and dark Pharisees and worldly priests, it broke out and still breaks out" (*S. u. K.*, p. 151). "Jesus died a heroic champion for the truth and for the people's redemption. He died because he tore the veil from the face of the hypocritical Pharisees—the 'coloured,' as the Talmud calls them—and showed the great masses their true nature" (*S. u. K.*, p. 155). "For this work of man's redemption, Jesus lived and offered himself up" (*R. B.*, p. 339).

and communities are from time to time the prey of catchwords, but not for long, as Abraham Lincoln's well-quoted saying suggests. But the world moved by maxims?

> Alas! the great world goes its way!

It never did and it never would consider the Rabbis or their maxims—

> Far less consider them again!

Let them show how they anticipated Jesus in every moral precept He gave—what does it matter? Who cares? It was Jesus, not Hillel, that conquered the ancient world. EN TOYTΩI NIKA was never thought or said of any Jewish symbol. If Christianity were no more than a heap of precepts, it might interest men to-day as little as the Talmud. We need not invoke the evidence of Paul, who had at least as good a knowledge of first-century Judaism as most of us have. Our Jewish critics have cleared the air for us, and helped us most materially. If the sublime ethic, the altruism, and so forth, are all in Judaism, then the real value is somewhere else. As Mr. J. M. Robertson says: "The fundamental source of error in this connection is the assumption that mere moral doctrine can possibly regenerate

any society independently of a vital change in social and intellectual conditions." We may differ as to how this vital change is to be produced, but the sentence as it stands is sound. It is a vital change that is needed, and the Christian Church has always known it and said so. The *differentia* between the Christian faith and all other religions is the personality of Jesus Himself. "When one loses Christ," said Luther, "all faiths (of the Pope, the Jews, the Turks, the common rabble) become one faith."*

We have come back to our problem again —the formation of some serious judgment upon Jesus Christ Himself. Here is the force that historically has transformed the thoughts of men, their standards, and their life. The old world to which He came has become new; the Lamb of God has taken away already much of the sin of the world. We have to study how He has done it. He begins with a group of a dozen or so men, living in great intimacy with Him; and I am not clear that there is anything in all Christian history so full of wonder as the transformation of

* Quoted by Harnack, *History of Dogma*, vii. 199.

these men.* Again and again it has come to me with surprise, even with embarrassment —how came the change in them? What made it? Through them again He has forced Himself upon the world—quite quietly. The tide itself could not come up so noiselessly. The world, itself, in an oblique way, has accepted His canons—for the criticism of other people. It has recognised Him, too, as its chief difficulty, the very ground and foundation of the Church of which it is so weary. He stands the permanent life of that Church, which has sacrificed so much and done it so gladly for Him, and which only lives, it assures us, in virtue of His perpetual presence.

Here we touch a theological problem, which I am wishful to avoid at present. We have to think at once of the historical Jesus and of the permanent Christ, and if we plunge immediately into the vexed question of their relations, it will take us into an area where it may not as yet be profitable to spend our time. For this is, above all, a matter that is not to be settled on *a priori* grounds, on the basis of our preconceptions. It was precisely

* See p. 171.

to avoid this that throughout this course we have gone to history first, to enlarge our range of actual facts and to deepen our understanding of the facts we already have. For the facts with which we have to deal are not objective dead things—like empty shells among pebbles on a beach—but living things, like Luther's "truths with hands and feet"; not always intelligible at the first glance, but always relevant.

Bearing in mind how much we have to learn and to assimilate before we are ripe for a judgment upon Jesus Christ, we have to realise that such a judgment has to be made. All day long, as Jesus hung on the cross, the crowds passed Him; and each man's life was affected by the judgment he made or did not make. The priest or the Pharisee who mocked—the soldier who sat at the foot of the Cross and diced—the women who wept—the pious people who turned away their faces—Simon who carried the cross—each man's life was conditioned for ever by his attitude that day, whether he thought so or not. So, through the centuries, the procession of mankind has moved past the Cross, judging, and

made or unmade by their judgments upon it. You and I are face to face with it now; some judgment upon it is inevitable—we cannot escape it. He is the central figure in all human history, and on our attitude to the centre all depends for us. On our judgment rests in great measure our use and place in society—as we ignore or admire, turn away or follow, hate or love, Him who has meant and means most for all mankind. How are we to judge Him?

In the rest of this lecture I want to offer, not a judgment, but a method—a caution and a reminder of some qualifications that we must have, if we are not to judge in a shallow way.*

First of all, let us recapitulate a few points. We have to remind ourselves again and again that we have to touch the fact independently of preconception, to know it from within, and to know it in its full significance and its true perspective. A hundred years or so ago, Tieck, writing of Novalis, said: "A spirit of

* Bengel's sentence at the beginning of his *Gnomon* (Pref. § vi.) supplies a useful caution: *Quisquis in Scriptura interpretanda aliquid navare vult, se ipse explorare debet quo jure id faciat.*

such originality must first be comprehended, his will understood, and his loving intention felt and replied to; so that not till his ideas have taken root in other minds, and brought forth new ideas, shall we see rightly, from the historical sequence, what place he himself occupied."* The words may surely be applied to the more difficult task we have in hand, and yet how often it is true that, as Bishop Creighton wrote: "We are clear by missing out half the elements involved."

We have further to remember that it is the task of criticism to distinguish the highest values, for these are the true ones. Anybody, it is said, could write a set of verses as good as such and such a poem of Wordsworth; but the question is, Who could equal him at his best? "A line of Wordsworth's," wrote Lamb, "is a lever to lift the immortal spirit."† And the illustration may suggest to us another thing. Do we remember how, in every other sphere, the critic has to be trained and is only trained by association with the masterpiece? that Wordsworth had to grow his own public,

* Quoted by Carlyle in his essay on Novalis.

† Letter to Barton, 15 May, 1824 (Lucas, No. 328).

because reading England knew only too well that his poetry "would not do," for the simple reason that they had never seen any poetry like it before? Who will say he is ripe enough to judge Jesus Christ? How many of us have judged Him from the Stoic or the Epicurean standpoint after all? We live in the twentieth century, so far as journalism and electric transit are concerned; and our minds have learned from nineteen centuries not enough to differentiate us from the Stoics and Epicureans who laughed at Paul on the Areopagus. Remember what Lamb said about the men who talked literature at him in the East India Company's office;* and let us ask how far we are trained enough for the judgment we have in hand. The acutest minds can be singularly unintelligent. Jeffrey, when he penned the opening sentences of his famous review on Wordsworth, little thought that, with all his brilliance and taste, he was making his name a byword for ever for bad criticism.

There is another caution of which we need often to remind ourselves. We are to apply

* Letter of 18 February, 1818 (Lucas, No. 229).

ourselves to the task of judging Jesus Christ, and to do it we have (as it is called) to reconstruct His personality. To those who know anything about Him the very words will be alarming enough. Anyone who has tried to reconstruct a personality, however simple, knows quite well—knows acutely in proportion to the pains he has given to the task—how difficult it is. Wordsworth tells us how to him

> the lonely roads
> Were open schools in which I daily read
> With most delight the passions of mankind,
> Whether by words, looks, sighs, or tears, revealed;
> There saw into the depth of human souls,
> Souls that appear to have no depth at all
> To careless eyes.

It is the careless eye that does the mischief. The mimic and the caricaturist represent a higher stage—a little higher. It is the essence of their work—the virtue and the defect of it—that they always give their subject from one angle. Their representations convey character, we say, but never completely. The sharp nose or the squint in the cartoon suggests the man at once, if it is only half-a-dozen strokes of the pencil. But a personality is a more com-

plicated thing. Character is many-faceted. It would be better, indeed, to drop such a metaphor from a polished stone, and to try another more living. Light and shade pass over the long grass as the wind sways it this way and that, now in and now out of the shadow of the tree, tree and grass both moving in the breeze, and the play of the gleams upon the blades is infinite. There are characters as various. Coleridge applied to Shakespeare the Greek epithet "myriad-minded," which he remembered or invented. Let us think over the character and the personality, with which we have to deal in Jesus Christ, rather more carefully. The general teaching of the Gospel is intelligible and simple; and it is amazing how, if you let people alone with the Gospels, they will understand Jesus Christ, if they are simple enough and true enough. But we have for our purpose to gain what Paul called "the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ."

There are four qualifications, if I may so call them, that I would suggest for anyone who proposes to make some judgment upon Jesus Christ; and every one of them is so

very obvious that I feel reluctance in putting them forward. But the carelessness of men and women in forming and expressing opinions is one of the astounding things in life; it is so general and it implies so much profound indifference to truth. It is of itself a negation of God. It is no new thing. In the Gospels we find our Lord remarking upon the insensitiveness of men to fact, and challenging them to face fact for themselves.

First of all, then, I set—and I do it quite simply and without irony—the knowledge of the plain facts of our Lord's life as recorded in the Gospels, and of the facts of the Church's history. This seems so obvious as not to need mention, but the Gospels do not receive that study to which they are entitled. People have a general impression of them at best, and learn with surprise (to quote an instance) that in the narrative of the Nativity the Magi are in one Gospel and the Shepherds in another. When I read Professor Lake's book on the Resurrection, I realised with some shame that I had never followed out any single Gospel in its story of what happened, but had in my mind a careless

conflate version, which had come to me I did not know how. How many of us have any clear idea of the characteristics of the four writers of the Gospels—to say nothing of Q or the *Logia*? How many of us have studied the methods of Matthew and Luke in using Mark and their other material? I will go further, and, waiving all this detailed work on our authorities—elementary enough—I would ask if we know the events of our Lord's life and His words? One has not far to go to meet extraordinary ignorance of these, and it does not seem to stand in the way of sweeping judgments upon Jesus Christ.*

I have spoken in a previous lecture of the permanent value to us of the historical Jesus as a safeguard against the complete evaporation of the Gospel into theory—no imaginary danger, as the history of the Church can show. I need say nothing at this point of the intense relief it is at times to take refuge in the plain tale of the life and teaching of the actual Jesus—and the whole of it, when we are

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* *Quam sapiens argumentatrix sibi videtur ignorantia humana*, is the caustic remark of Tertullian (*De Spect.* 2).

bombarded with ingenuities and eschatologies. The beauty and the sanity and the power of these plain books without adjectives come full of healing to the soul; and one recalls with sympathy how eighteen centuries ago the plain style of the Christian's books was one of the things that attracted Tatian to Christianity.*

What happens when people yield to this attraction? Here are a few words, not my own, but those of one who was brought up quite without religious training, but found under some stress that life needs a base in God: "And then I began to read the Bible. I was always coming on bits of the New Testament in books; and I tried to believe the appeal lay in the style. But then I took my courage

* Tatian meant more particularly the prophets. In passing it does seem worth while to ask how the writers of the Gospel came to write as they did—plain fact, no comment, no word of admiration for Jesus or of condemnation for His enemies. The same sort of reserve has won for Thucydides a name, among modern scholars, for intellectual coldness and aloofness—as if it were impossible to convey real feeling without saying so. Ancient critics, however, saw and felt the power and pathos of Thucydides through the reserve; and the quietness of the evangelists surely adds incalculably to their story.

in both hands and read the New Testament right through—and saw there was no contact (with God) except in Christ."

We may ask the man who criticises Jesus Christ if he has honestly read that history—with the decent modicum of attention that is due to a book which means so much to men and women. With a great work, a single reading is of little use; it is only intimacy that counts. One might ask, further, whether the book has been read with any sense of that aftergrowth of human association, which, in the case of master-works, adds so much to the value of what the writer had consciously in mind, or, more truly, developes what he felt from what he expressed. Such books never yield their meaning to the hurried reader, as much of the criticism of Euripides (for example) will prove. It is something to read a masterpiece in the copy some friend has used and pencilled, and to follow that friend along with the author, "reading where the quiet hand points." The New Testament, if one took the trouble to read it so, is full of such marks. Think of that chapter which Knox on his death-bed asked for, as the one

"in which he had first cast anchor."* The New Testament is not to be understood fully without the community behind it, for which it was written and which has lived with it all the centuries, till (in more senses than one) it knows it by heart.

All this brings me to what I may call the second qualification—the historical imagination. Once again let us recall Carlyle's words on Novalis—of the value of a book in introducing us to "some earnest, deep-minded, truth-loving man" till we can follow the movement of this thought.† Can we read the Gospels till we penetrate the phrase and see the man—on the hillside among his friends, and catch the gleam of his eye, and mark what he does with his hands‡—how the casual word touches some hidden spring, as it were, and from the treasure of the heart comes the speech—and such speech! Or have we a higher and keener attention for Novalis? Is it fair, it may be asked, to expect so much of ordinary people? That is to beg the question. The

* John xvii.; Hume Brown, *Life of Knox*, ii., p. 287.

† See p. 59.

‡ *Cf.* Mark x. 21; i. 41; and Acts xiii. 16; xxi. 40; xxvi. 1 (all three of Paul speaking).

critic is not an ordinary person, if there are any ordinary persons at all. We are all capable of much more mental energy than we care to exert; and when a man begins to talk of ordinary people, it is generally a sign of shuffling of some sort. In any case, those of us who are in earnest about Jesus Christ, who wish really to understand Him, may be expected to have higher standards of knowledge and sympathy.

But these, after all, depend less on intellectual than on moral character. It is remarkable how Carlyle, in describing one and another of the great men in his Essays, says sooner or later the same thing about each of them, even when they are so different as Boswell and Burns and Voltaire—that the man had a great loving heart, and that was how he could interpret men and speak to men and win them. What degree of loving insight have you? is Carlyle's question,* and

* *Cf.* the passage in the essay on Mirabeau: "The real quantity of our insight,—how justly and thoroughly we shall comprehend the nature of a thing, especially of a human thing,—depends on our patience, our fairness, lovingness, what strength soever we have: intellect comes from the whole man, as it is the light that enlightens the whole man."

we may ask it of the student of the Gospels. For anyone who loves the Gospels can understand them and live himself into the scenes they describe till he knows the company there to some purpose. Sympathy is the highest mode of intelligence. The word has suffered from being used by dull people to cover their coldness, and it is safer to counsel reading with admiration. Goethe said that Schlegel, if he was to criticise Euripides, ought to do it "on his knees." If we try this plan with a new author, we find often enough that after a few pages we have unconsciously risen from our knees; the man is not great enough or true enough to keep us there. But, be it sympathy or admiration, some such plan is necessary if we are to get the full significance of any great work or any great man, and be liberated from the small attitude of the merely clever person.

The third qualification is some natural or cultivated sympathy with the fundamental ideas and feelings of Jesus Christ, and it follows from what we have just been considering. Does the critic stand near enough to the man whom he criticises, in interests, in

tastes, in training? Once more the emphasis falls on the necessity of the critic being trained. The criticism of the outsider is everywhere recognised as worthless. Is a critic of Jesus to be trusted who has no essential sympathy with religion; who does not see how native it is to man, like art and music;* whose instincts for religion have become atrophied? Is he not, rather, like a colour-blind person, who has not studied pictures, let loose in a picture-gallery? What can he say without giving himself away? Jesus is, after all, the highest term in religion; and just as a child prefers a coloured picture-postcard of some intelligible kitten or horse to any Raphael or Botticelli, the man, for whom religion is not a passion, who is not intensely conscious of those needs which religion alone can satisfy, cannot be expected to care about Jesus. The savage often does not; why should the Epicurean, or anybody

* *Cf.* John Watson, *The Philosophical Basis of Religion*, p. 187: "Religion is not something accidental to man, but something inseparable from his rational life. It is that undying and inextinguishable faith in the divine, the denial of which is ultimately the destruction of all other beliefs."

else to whom, by his own choice in life or by accident, Jesus is as yet unintelligible in His greatness?

Let us take two aspects of what religion meant to Jesus, and ask ourselves, first, how far we understand His passion for the redemption of men? That is quite a simple and obvious thing to ask. "The Son of Man came to seek and to save that which was lost." Do we realise how much He implied by "lost," or to what point of salvation He meant to bring those He found? We are all touched to-day, more or less, by the social needs of millions of our fellow-countrymen; but how far are we prepared to go to save them, and how high do we think of raising them? Is our maximum the spiritual heights of the middle classes? Let us try to realise the intensity and the passion with which Jesus gave Himself "a ransom for many"—and ask ourselves how much we are prepared to face for the sake of the vulgar and the depraved? If we share His mind at all on this point, we shall be able to understand Him growingly; and as we do so, we shall realise more and more the amount of redeeming which He saw men

need. Indeed, as men come into the mind of Jesus, the more conscious they grow how much they need Him.

Do we realise, again, in any vivid or true way the extent and nature of Jesus' sense of God? how He sees and apprehends God in all things, not merely as a great item in every situation, but as the one factor? how alive He is for the fact of God? how full all life is of God for Him? Have we any sympathy with, or intelligence of, one whose life is so filled with the power and the joy of the real presence of God? All this is obvious in the Gospels, if we are trained enough in our business of observation to see the flame in the burning bush. To put it more directly, Have we any sense of needing God, or do we crave at all for contact with God? If we do not, we shall not be interested in Jesus.

The fourth qualification shall be the sense of insufficiency. Plato spoke of philosophy being the offspring of wonder;* and it was

* *Theaetetus*, 154E. *Cf.* Aristotle, *Metaphysica*, i., 2, who adds that the cessation of wonder is the end of all philosophy.

a beautiful and illuminating thought. It is wonder that makes the poet and the painter; and it is only as they embody it in their work that it appeals to men;* it is only as we accept it that we can learn the meaning and value of their art. When this faculty of wonder dies out in us, we lose the world and all it means of beauty and truth. There is human nature, there is that morality which is deeply implanted in man and without which he can achieve nothing and cannot realise himself—who, as the old phrase goes, is sufficient for these things? There are men always in every sphere who are masters of everything that is to be known there, and can inform us completely—and we turn away from them; they are weary, stale, flat, and unprofitable. In religion it is the same; it is only as we grasp its wonder that we can begin to understand. In all these things, in Nature, in art, in morality, in religion, the infinite element is what appeals to the human mind and soul. It is the experience of the Church that in Jesus Christ is this same

* "If a poem is not wonderful," says a critic of our own day, "it is nothing."

quality, and that for His interpreter the same aptitude for the infinite is essential. As men study Him in earnest, they grow less satisfied with their knowledge and their understanding of Him; He goes beyond them, and they follow here with the same sort of experience that men have who take seriously any other permanent aspect of God's manifestation of Himself*—the path is daily lit up with new wonder, fresh surprises and new marvels quicken the follower, as the exploration extends.

The German Jew, Börne, said that Christianity is "the religion of all poor devils."† Jesus, in another vernacular, said much the same thing. It is for the people who are not satisfied, who know their need and feel it progressively—the tempted, the beaten, the miserable. Christ is most theirs who need Him most and know it; and He is best learned through the sense of our own limitations. It is the old story of the Church—He is known by acceptance. With Him, as in

* *Cf.* a striking sentence in Mark x. 32.

† Brandes, *Main Currents in Nineteenth Century Literature*, vol. vi., p. 97.

the case of every real interest, the secret of knowledge is identification. "To know Christ," said Melanchthon, "is to know His benefits—not to contemplate His natures or the modes of His incarnation."* Luther said the same:

"The Sophists have described Christ—how He should be Man and God—they count His legs and arms, and combine His two natures together wonderfully; and that is only a sophistic knowledge of the Lord Christ. For Christ is not called Christ for having two natures. How does that touch me? But He bears this lordly and comfortable name from the office and work that He has taken upon Him; *that* gives Him the name. That by nature He is man and God, is His affair; but that He uses His office and pours forth His love and becomes my Saviour and Redeemer, that is all to my comfort and good."†

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* *Hoc est Christum cognoscere, beneficia ejus cognoscere, non ejus naturas, modos incarnationis ejus contueri;* Intr. to his *Loci*, 1st edition, 1521; quoted by Harnack, *History of Dogma* (tr.), vii., p. 198, n.

† Quoted by Harnack, *History of Dogma* (tr.), vii., p. 2.

As we saw before, it is in action that truth is discovered and tested,* by the application of individual experiment to inherited experience. Jesus Christ is best understood in the strenuous life of love and service of men —in "battles with dulness and darkness," as Carlyle called them—in the failure of our strength, when His power comes into play—in the endeavour to meet the need of other men, when our own springs of help are dry and we turn to Him—in the wrestle with God in the darkness, when He alone lets in the light upon God for which we crave. "Doubt of any sort cannot be removed except by Action."† It is in work of this sort alone that the character can be trained, on which depends the "loving insight" we need, and, indeed, the mind with all its powers. "How can we," asked Henry David Thoreau, "expect a harvest of thought who have not

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* Falsehood, says Clement of Alexandria (*Protr.* 77), is not got rid of by merely putting the true alongside of it, but by using the truth.

† *Christiani hominis est non de dogmatis magnifice loqui sed cum deo ardua semper et magna facere.* Zwingli, quoted by Harnack, *History of Dogma* (tr.), vii. (end).

had a seed-time of character?" How can we, we in turn may ask, expect to understand such a character, such a personality, as that of Jesus Christ, if we have never grappled in earnest with the powers of sin and misery, over which He won the victory, "not without dust and heat"?

The last word for to-day is this. When a man sets about judging some masterpiece in art or literature, as long as he knows little about it, he is pleased with his power of judgment. But if he consort in earnest with the masterpiece, till he knows it, the positions are reversed, and he finds that the masterpiece becomes his judge at last—educates him and tests him and shows him himself. Some of us begin by judging Jesus Christ, and find, as we come to know Him, that His standards replace ours, that the very nature of the case requires us, in the old phrase, to learn of Him, and that where we started as critics, we end as disciples—and are glad of it.

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